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Theme:

THE GOSPEL AND VILLAGE RELIGION IN SOUTH INDIA

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EDITORIAL

THIS number is devoted to a discussion of an aspect of living Hinduism to which little attention has been paid. As a field for research, the religious ideas and practices which prevail among village folk in India, of caste and outcaste background, have been neglected both by Hindu scholars and Christian evangelists. There are many reasons for this. One is the feeling that it is not worth the time and labour involved. They represent primitive notions in religion and culture which, it is claimed, people are giving up anyway. In fact, there was a time when Village Religion was summarily dismissed as " lower Hinduism " which was not to be taken seriously. Besides, the caste organization of rural life in which, until recently, the social status of serfdom was much more clearly defined, the tendency was to regard *grāma devatā* worship, with its gruesome rites and blood sacrifices, as the religion of the outcaste and the low caste. Another reason is that the phenomenon bristles with local variations of cult and custom which do not easily lend themselves to systematic formulation and reliable generalisations.

Nearly half-a-century ago two Missionary students, Dwight Elmore and Henry Whitehead, did indeed venture to carry out some investigation of Village Religion in certain areas of Andhra Pradesh and Tamilnad. But in assembling and explaining their data both these scholars were greatly influenced by the then current theories of the totemistic and ancestor-worship origin of religion. Moreover, their findings have now become out-of-date, though some of their observations are still illuminating. There are also other studies undertaken and directed by Indian and American scholars which are primarily from the standpoint of anthropology and sociology. As such they are of much value. But they provide little material of special interest to the student of religion. A more recent study by another Missionary student, C. G. Diehl, however, is of significance in that it seeks to break new ground by exploring further the magical aspect of the rites and rituals of Village Religion in South India.

It was therefore not surprising that the Seminar expressed concern at the lack of factual information about the beliefs and practices of Village Religion. Although most of the participants had lived and worked in rural areas for some length of time, the general confession was that they possessed little first-hand knowledge of *grāma devatā* worship. They had not thought that such data based on case studies of local village cults in different parts of South India was of practical concern to the Christian evangelist. The importance of the Seminar really consisted

in indicating the present need for such reliable information. Elsewhere in these pages we have published a conspectus of the various reports produced by the different discussion groups. The questionnaire used in this connection is also appended.

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Can a valid distinction be drawn between the religion which centres round *grāma devatā* worship and the sectarian forms of popular Hinduism which also prevail in rural areas? Admitting that they are to be traced back to different traditional sources, would it be true to say that a noticeable difference between Village Religion and Village Hinduism persists today? These are questions which cannot be easily answered. The comprehensive claims made for Hinduism as *sanātana dharma* by present-day Hindu leaders would indicate that *grāma devatā* worship is now regarded as one other manifestation of the composite whole of Hinduism. This we believe is a point which is not appreciated by missionary observers and their Indian colleagues. This does not however mean that it *is* Hinduism: it only means that *grāma devata* worship is *also* Hinduism. With the increasing tendency to what is now described as "sanskritisation", the trend is towards abandoning such gruesome rites as the buffalo sacrifice and the adopting of the more respectable rites of Hindu temple worship in the matter of offerings made at the shrines of the *devatās* especially in those which are now found in many towns and cities. What is implied by "sanskritisation" is the sociological fact of cultural and social upgrading. But from the standpoint of religious beliefs and practices it is in fact "Hinduisation", a very subtle form of "proselytisation", for which Hindu leaders themselves would prefer the word "absorption".

But despite this change in the manner of worship and the substance of the offerings made at these shrines, the motive for worship and the characteristic technique adopted in approaching the *devatās* would appear to remain unaltered. A *grāma devatā* is approached with a specific request, like the gift of a child or the healing of a particular disease. This is because she has acquired a regional reputation for granting such boons. The *pūjāri* who officiates at the shrine knows the technique of so presenting the appeal to the *devtā* that the request *will* be granted. Here the rite is obviously magical in that the underlying theory is that *if* the correct technique is employed the *devatā* will be under pressure to grant the boon. It is the element of coercion that distinguishes magic from religion. At the same time it should be remembered that the "spell" which is characteristic of magical rites and "prayer" which is at the centre of religious worship cannot always be kept distinct. Very often the "prayers" of many pious people

become in actual practice the same as the spells employed in magic. It is significant that in Vedic language the word *mantra* stands for both prayer and spell!

Moreover, it is interesting that in *gramā devatā* worship it is never *moksha*, final deliverance from this earthly existence, that is desired by the votary. Prof. Yamunacharya has pointedly drawn attention to this in his article. The good sought is always something which refers to earthly being, such as health, success, children and the like. This is not only true of *grāma devatā* worship but also of the worship of the minor Hindu *devas* in the village temples. That is why it is not uncommon for high caste Hindus, even if they are educated city-dwellers (as well as for many Christians and Moslems) to appeal to the *grāma devatā* in case of serious calamity or dire need which is experienced and felt in this world, and at a desperate hour of present crisis.

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All this raises the issue whether it is not true that in the minds of most people everywhere there is the same assumption that while religion *per se* is concerned with all that we associate with man's ultimate good and final destiny, his " salvation " and " deliverance " however conceived, magic (which is an unfortunate word to imply this other aspect of religion) is interested in helping man to further his interests, primarily as an individual, in regard to life's events in the here and now. This seems true not only of Hinduism but also of all other religions. And Christianity is no exception.

" We can isolate certain features and make a theoretical distinction between religion and magic," writes Dr. C. G. Diehl, " but we shall never find them in real life in that pure shape. And so we are still prone to ask if the attempt to separate them is worth while. Perhaps in real life magic and religion are so overlapping as to make a separation unjustified or simply impossible. They may even be essentially one so that any distinction between them becomes artificial and misleading. Or, one may even go to the extent of asking if the two words magic and religion have any sense as far as an interrelationship is concerned. They may have been used arbitrarily as mere names of now this phenomenon, now that."[1]

There is much truth in that observation. For what we are apt to regard as Magic is not so much " the sinister dimension of religious life " as in fact a " frontier " which runs all through one side, as it were, of all the religions of mankind. On this frontier there is no dividing wall of partition. It is difficult to say just where one territory ends and

[1] C. J. Diehl, *Instrument and Purpose*, Gleerups, Lund, 1956, p. 16.

the other begins. There is constant traffic both ways from the one realm into the other. Dr. D. T. Niles narrated at a recent Conference on Evangelism in Ceylon the story of a Jaffna Christian lady which well illustrated the point we are trying to make. The lady was a highly accomplished third generation Christian of considerable means and high social standing. She had been happily married for some years, but had not been blessed with any children. She had prayed in her own Church and at a Roman Catholic shrine for a child, to no avail. Persuaded by her Hindu friends and relatives, she went to a famous Hindu temple favoured by many childless women and the miracle had happened. So she came to Dr. Niles with the puzzled query, " What am I to do—remain a Christian or turn a Hindu ?" And Niles' answer was, " Amma, if it was only a child you wanted it makes no difference whether you are a Hindu or a Christian ". She had not understood what religion was. She was in reality thinking of neither Hinduism nor Christianity as religions. Only when a person comes to grips with the question of ultimate destiny does one's faith become the dynamic by which one lives. The Christians faith rests four-square on the imperious demand " Seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added unto you ". It is in facing up to this demand that man encounters Christ as the Author and Perfecter of faith.

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A great deal is said about the impact of modern forces of science and technology on the ideas and practices of *grāma devatā* worship. Knowledge, they say, dispels ignorance, that education stamps out superstition. For this-worldly benefits, health, security and abundance, people will more and more turn to modern medicine, modern machinery and modern criteria of values. So they say. But the stream of wistful pilgrims to the sacred shrines of all religions, the popular wayside traffic in soothsaying on the side walks of our busy city thoroughfares, the serious consultations in regard to planetary influenoes to which many people in high places resort in times of personal crises—all these, however, point to the contrary. Our common humanity seems to assert itself over the differences of religious background and upbringing, as much as it cuts across our class snobberies, caste consciousness and racial differentiations. All that we associate with what we have called Village Religion is no monopoly of the village mind. All men live dangerously near the magical frontier of religion.

" Man knows that he lives with reference to the Beyond, to God," writes Walter Freytag. " But then there begins what is so clearly described in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans : he forms notions, and he makes his own gods. He exchanges God for his own gods.

This always takes the form of his not being prepared to face fully the questions inherent in his existence. In his trouble he does not want to be fully dependent upon God, but introduces means of his own which are intended to help him..... This form of self-assertion is only able to make things easy for itself at a certain cost; it is never, in fact, ultimately certain, and is open to the influences of new religious ideas, thoughts, and assurances, which do not themselves give any final certainty either."[2]

It is this diagnosis of the deeper spiritual ailment of modern man to which the Christian evangelist needs to give heed. " In his trouble he does not want to be fully dependent upon God ". The persistence of the beliefs and practices of Village Religion among village Christians is a phenomenon which is not restricted to village Christians alone. It is true of Christians everywhere in India and it may not be always explained as altogether due to a carry-over from their antecedents. The underlying belief in every case is that at times of crises, as in the case of life-cycle rites, it is the protection of other principalities and powers that should be secured. The rites in themselves are powerful reminders that in such crises man needs to reckon with his own helplessness of himself to meet them. But more, they should be solemn occasions of commitment to the One Almighty God Who alone presides over all human destiny, enabling man by the redeeming power which He has made available in Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit to realize the end for which man has been created.

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The Seminar also spent a great deal of time discussing the issues raised for the Church in India by the continued hold that customs and social institutions of traditional, non-Christian background have on the second and third generation Christians. Opinion was divided on the point whether these were cultural values that could well be preserved, or whether these in fact also implied certain religious assumptions which were contrary to the Christian faith. The discussion led to the more fundamental question of the concept of " conversion ". What efforts are being made, especially in the continued after-nurture of the spiritual lives of people who are admitted into the Christian fold so that conversion does not tend to be thought of as necessarily turning on a communal transference of allegiance or on a mere credal affirmation? This challenge is driven home in the trenchant words of Bishop Stephen Neill in a recent book, which we would do well to bear in mind. " On a deeper level than conduct," remarks Dr. Neill, " and in the end more

[2] W. Freytag, *The Gospel and the Religions*, S.C.M. Press, London, 1957, p. 40.

menacing is the persistent underground of non-Christian structures and patterns of thought.....They persist in all of us, racially as well as individually.....This explains the distressing emergence in the third and fourth generations of Christians of old evil practices such as one would imagine to have long since disappeared from the Christian consciousness.....This inner schism cannot be dealt with by the multiplication of Christian ceremonies and practices. All outward and indeed inward Christian life is built on an insecure foundation until the inner schism is radically healed."[3]

Many of the papers which were presented at the Seminar are published in this number, though not all of them. The illuminating article by Prof. M. N. Srinivas, which originally appeared in the *Illustrated Weekly*, is reproduced here with the generous permission of the distinguished author and the Editor of *the Weekly*. The relevance of that essay for the general theme dealt with in this number is apparent. In the entire planning and the direction of the Seminar we have been greatly helped by the enthusiastic leadership of Dr. S. J. Samartha. The Institute was gratified by the eager interest evinced in the Seminar by the Missionary Language School and the United Theological College, as well as by the active support given by the various dioceses of the Church of South India, who sent in all as many as twenty-five accredited representatives.

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[3] Stephen C. Neill, *The Unfinished Task*, Edinburgh House Press, London, 1957, pp. 117-18.

BASIC BELIEFS AND PRACTICES OF VILLAGE RELIGION IN SOUTH INDIA

By Dr. S. J. Samartha

Village religion in South India has received comparatively little attention in recent years. Among other factors, the powerful expressions of resurgent Hinduism, on the one hand, and the secular democratic forces of the Welfare State, on the other, have tended to overshadow the persistent beliefs and continuing practices of village religion. The subject, however, is important and needs careful study in all its aspects. This article is limited in its scope and is concerned mainly with an analytical and descriptive account of some of the important features of village religion, particularly as they may be observed in the villages of South India today.

I

The Persistence of Village Religion

In spite of the religious and secular forces which touch the daily life of the village today the important beliefs and rites of village religion and the attitude towards life which they inspire still persist in an effective manner. Desai correctly observes that "contemporary rural society in India has become the battle ground of struggle between the forces of religious orthodoxy and authoritarian social conceptions on the one hand and those of secular democratic forces on the other".[1] While these forces certainly affect the social structure and the pattern of village life, to what extent they have 'dereligionised' the people remains to be seen. A journey through the villages or a brief visit to the outskirts of cities like Bangalore or Madras, where people from the villages seeking employment in cities have settled down, will give plenty of evidence to show that village religion is a significant force. A recent trip through Mysore and Andhra States gave plenty of indications that village religion is by no means a spent force, but that, on the contrary, in certain places it shows considerable signs of vitality. The persistence of village religion even in areas where modern forces of material progress have effectively penetrated is certainly remarkable. In one roadside village within a few furlongs could be found a Hindu temple, the tomb of a Muslim

[1] A. R. Desai, *Introduction to Rural Sociology*, The Indian Society of Agricultural Economics, Bombay, 1953.

saint, the shrine of a *grāma devatā*, a cobra stone and, along with these modern buildings of the Block Development Scheme, a school, an agricultural centre and a *samāja mandira*—all apparently practising peaceful co-existence. The daily life of the villagers in family and society is largely affected by religion. It determines their attitude towards life, influences their ethical standards and continues to exercise a powerful hold in shaping their patterns of behaviour even in a number of secular areas. Any facile assumption that the acids of modernity have corroded the traditional foundations of village religion and have succeeded in undermining its ritual practices is therefore unwarranted.

II

What is Village Religion?

It is exceedingly difficult to define such a complex phenomenon as village religion which includes both a group of beliefs and a set of rituals. It is easier to describe than to define it. A responsible approach to the subject is not easy. Generalisations are often inadequate because they tend to exclude certain important exceptions and particular descriptions and interpretations of limited local cults may not always bring out the totality and complexity of the vast structure of village religion. The description of village religion as 'Hinduism at its lower levels' is misleading partly because of its condescending flavour and partly because religious beliefs and practices found in many villages are wider than Hinduism. For the sake of clarity a distinction should perhaps be made between *rural* religion and *village* religion. Rural religion would include many forms of Hinduism certainly, also Islam and Christianity in some areas, along with what may be described as exclusively village religion. In some villages of former Hyderabad State many shrines of Muslim saints and a few mosques are to be found in rural areas. Christian churches and small Christian communities are also to be found in quite a few villages. Hinduism, particularly centering round temple worship, can be seen practically in all areas. In view of these, it might be better to reserve the term 'village religion' to a particular set of beliefs and practices. These would include at least the following: animism, 'the sense of being alive in a world that is alive', *i.e.*, a 'daimonic' conception of the world, the acceptance and worship of *grāma devatās*, and certain mythologies connected with them, sacrifices which may often include the shedding of blood, applied astrology, omens, divination and certain forms of magic. These provide the villager with a basic set of beliefs, a certain outlook towards life, a body of rituals and an institutional complex all of which affect his individual, family and social life.

Moreover, theoretically it is also possible to make a distinction between village *religion* and village *Hinduism*, but the interaction between the two in the practical community life of the village is exceedingly complex. While it is certainly true that Hinduism has affected village religion at various points, it is equally true that village religion also has affected Hinduism in many respects as it is practised in the daily life of the villager. This interrelation is brought out in a striking manner when one considers the place of the temple in representative villages in South India.

There is a rich variety of temples in South Indian villages. These may be *Vaiṣṇavite* or *Śaivite* or dedicated to *Śakti* cults. The same village may contain different temples and very often the shrines of the *grāma devatās* may also be found within the temple compound signifying a compromise between Hinduism and village religion. Desai emphasises the importance of the village temple from the sociological point of view. Down through the ages it has served as a point of social unity and authority. It has been and still is a place of worship and prayer; a centre of education both religious and secular, although in recent years the schools have taken over the task of secular education: an agency of social welfare work; the hub of organised collective, social and religious functions in the village; the guardian of all traditional culture—art, music, dance, sculpture and painting; the source of ethical values regulating the life of the village; and the authoritative dispenser of justice. Many of these functions which held together the social structure of the village through the centuries have now been taken over by other agencies. In spite of this, however, the temple or the shrine in the village is in a real sense the visible expression of the people's religion.

The village temple is also the visible symbol of the interaction and mutual influence of the different religious forces operating in the village, so that the presence of different deities in a particular temple very often gives indications of the historical interplay of peoples and their religions in the course of history. In a temple near Tumkur in the Mysore State, there is a strange mixture of Hindu deities of different sects along with Muslim painting. When asked about this, the temple priest replied that in this particular temple no distinctions between gods are observed and that all are welcome to inhabit its sacred halls. Interesting questions may be asked regarding the existence of different Hindu sectarian gods in different areas and the prevalence of *grāma devatā* worship sometimes side by side with the other gods. For instance, why did Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism establish themselves in certain villages and Śakti cults in other areas? How did the *grāma devatās* come to be associated with admittedly Hindu gods in certain areas? Do the

migrations of gods and goddesses indicate the migrations of people also? Desai remarks: "Fusion of gods and goddesses reveals the historical process of the fusion of peoples. The hierarchy of gods and goddesses and the branding of certain deities as villainous and extolling the others as beneficent, unfold though in mythological terms, the struggles among races and peoples and the subordination of some to others in real historical conflicts."[2] This is a valid observation which can be substantiated with evidence available in many villages in South India today.

Sanātana dharma in its efforts to come to terms with persistent village religion tends to describe it as 'Hinduism at its lower levels' or, using the concept of different layers ascribe to village religion the lowest. While one can recognise signs of struggle between Dravidian animism and Aryan religion in the villages of South India and, while there is plenty of evidence to justify what Srinivas calls 'the Sanskritisation' of non-Sanskritic deities[3] in the course of history, it is by no means correct to say that Hinduism has completely 'Sanskritised' or absorbed village religion. Almost every temple in the village contains more than one deity, the chief one from whom the temple derives its name and others who are subordinate or secondary. Thus in Coorg in Kuklūr the chief deity is Bhadrakāḷi, but in the temple, along with her image, is also the image of Ganeśa, of Saratāvu (Ayyappa) and a *liṅga* representing Śiva. Outside the shrine, but inside the temple compound are stone representations of Ayyappa, Pattu Kūt Patāla (ten spirits from the underworld) and Kuttatamma (mother of Kutta). All these are considered subordinate to Bhadrakāḷi. Instances of this kind may be multiplied with reference to various parts of India and indicate a compromise by which village deities are accepted into the Hindu pantheon.

Srinivas in his careful and detailed study of the religion and society among the Coorgs points out that while 'Sanskritic Hinduism' has a plasticity which enables it to absorb local religious phenomena, it frequently happens that the Sanskritic deities themselves undergo significant changes in process of being localised. He gives some examples. The deity Ketrappa in Coorg is usually identified with the Vedic god Kshetrapāla (the protector of the field). In the Vedas, Kshetrapāla is a deity presiding over fields and is invoked to grant agricultural prosperity. In the course of 2,500 years Kshetrapāla has travelled to every part of India. In Bengal he has even changed his sex and has become Kshetradevi, and is considered a manifestation of Lakshmi. In Coorg he has lost all touch with land and takes to a diet of 'blue-bubble

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[2] Desai, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

[3] M. N. Srinivas, *Religion and Society among the Coorgs of South India*, Oxford, 1952, *See* Ch. VII and other references.

toddy and crowing cocks'. (What he does during these days of prohibition, one can only guess!). Ayyappa is another deity popular in Coorg. In Sanskrit mythology he is Shāsta, the son of Śiva and Mohini, referred to also as Hariharaputra or the son of both Viṣṇu and Śiva. Among the Coorgs Shāsta is referred to as Ayyappa or Sarvātu and has become the deity presiding over hunting and his Sanskritic origin is not always recalled. Another Sanskritic deity which has undergone modification in the process of becoming acceptable to the devotees is Subramaṇya who, in Sanskrit mythology, is Skanda, the warrior son of Śiva. But in Coorg, Tulu, Telugu and Kannada countries he is identified with the cobra which is regarded by orthodox Hindus as a deity and anthills inhabited by cobras are worshipped at Subramaṇya's festival.

Now Srinivas' contention that these are instances of the 'complete absorption of local phenomena in Sanskritic Hinduism' is not quite justified because it can equally well be argued that these and similar instances also point out to the absorption of Sanskritic Hindu gods by village religion. Why should it not be described as 'the non-Sanskritisation' of certain Sanskritic forms of Hinduism, pointing out not so much to the absorbing power of Hinduism as the transforming strength of village religion itself? This point of view can be further supported by the fact that in many of these village temples and shrines it is not the Brahmin, but the non-Brahmin who is the officiating priest. It must also be noted that the Brahmin in the village is much impressed by the power of the village gods and has been influenced by non-Sanskritic forms of worship. It is common to find Brahmins themselves making offerings to village gods and goddesses sometimes through friends who act as intermediaries, particularly during epidemics. In many instances, therefore, it is not so much the village deities submitting themselves to the authority of the higher gods of Sanskritic Hinduism, but the gods of the latter being so transformed as to be all but absorbed into the structure of village deities. All this points out to the need for a careful and thorough study of village religion in all its manifestations and particularly in its complicated relationship to Hinduism, Islam and Christianity where these two later religions enter the structure of village religion and, also in relation to the forces of secularism which are slowly but steadily influencing the life and conduct of the villager today.

III

The Grāma Devatās

Village religion has certain common characteristics recognized all over India. The nature and attributes of the *grāma devatās*, the tech-

nique of propitiating them and the mode of behaviour based on village religion have many features which are common to different areas. Therefore certain general statements can be made about its basic beliefs and practices, but as Srinivas rightly observes 'any attempt to make them more precise will have to take into account of exceptions at every point'. It must also be remembered that in spite of the common features, there are important regional variations as represented particularly by linguistic groups. Here also between linguistic areas there are certain common forms of ritual and belief. Malayalam and Tamil areas have certain similar forms. Kannada and Telugu groups have some common features. In South Kanara the Tulu linguistic group in the villages forms more or less a distinct unit. Coorg, because of its geographical location, has certain cultural forms which it shares with Kannada, Malayalam and Tulu areas.

Village deities are usually represented by stones or by crude images of stone or wood. Sometimes the stones are just embedded in the earth, but sometimes they have a small roof over them. On the roadside near Telangana two crude wooden images of Māriamma dressed in sarees were recently seen and there were obvious signs that some sort of *pūjā* was being offered to them perhaps daily by passing villagers. Frequently at the foot of a tree or in the shade of a grove can be found small shrines dedicated to village deities. Sometimes these shrines are elaborate and there are even wooden cars to represent chariots in which the deities are taken round the village during the annual festival. In several areas these village shrines are being renovated. Reinforced cement concrete is being used to strengthen the structure and the images are painted with bright colours. Worship and rituals vary from place to place. In some shrines *pūjā* may be offered daily, in others once a week, but normally the annual festival is an important event in the life of the village.

It must be pointed out that the term *grāma devatā* is not a precise description because *village* religion is not confined to villages only. Right in the heart of practically every big city in India, Bangalore, Banaras, Madras and others one can meet these *grāma devatās*. Further, it should not be understood that only small shrines are used to house these *devatās*. Sometimes elaborate and big temples are dedicated to them as for example, the Ponnamman temple at Egmore, Madras, and the Mariamman temple at Virudhnagar.[4]

Certain characteristics of *grāma devatās* may be noted here.

1. With a few exceptions, the *grāma devatās* are mostly female deities. Ellamma (boundary mother) is a familiar deity in Telugu and

[4] *See* C. G. Diehl, *Instrument and Purpose*, Gleerups, Lund., 1956, pp. 173 ff.

Tamil villages. Excluding Kerala, Māri or Māriamma is a common deity in the South Indian villages. She presides over epidemic diseases such as plague, cholera, and smallpox. The propitiation of Māri takes place usually in summer or whenever there is an outbreak of epidemics in the villages. It is interesting to note that in spite of the work of health departments along with vaccination, the villager very often still propitiates Māri during the time of the epidemic possibly as a sort of double insurance.

2. However, among the village deities there are gods also, though these are few. Sometimes these are husbands and sometimes the attendants of the goddesses. *Ayyanār* is a popular god in Tamil villages keeping watch over the village while people sleep. *Bīredēvaru* is a popular god in Kannada villages. *Ponnappa* in Coorg though not a deity, is the spirit of a powerful magician who gives headache to every one. *Kuttichāttan* in Malabar is a mischievous god of good and bad luck. Among the Tulu people *Bobbarya*, *Kotichennayya* and others are spirits of men. The most common village deities in Coorg are Bhagavati (*Povvedi*) and Ayyappa (or Shāsta). The traditional songs sung at the festivals of these deities make quite a few of them immigrants from other areas. In Coorg some of them are immigrants from South Kanara and Malabar. Sometimes these deities are represented in the songs as going round the temples seeking shelter. In Tulunād the elaborate songs connected with the spirits describe some of them as coming from Goa or Cochin or from beyond the mountains.[5]

2. As a rule the village deities are not regarded as gentle. They are usually short tempered and can easily get angry as a result of which calamities might fall upon the whole village and might continue until the *devatā* is properly propitiated. Māriamma invariably brings epidemics. There are others who bring about fear in the children and various kinds of diseases. When the deity Maderappa settles down in a village in Coorg, immediately flowers wither, seeds fail to sprout and babies die in cradles. Another *grāma devatā* declares that while she would reward those who will propitiate her she would shoot an arrow at those who refuse to do so. Among the Tulus all sorts of troubles might come upon individuals or the village if the deities are not properly propitiated. In return for propitiation the *grāma devatā* keeps away

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[5] The missionaries of the Basel Mission have in their earlier years done some careful studies of village religion in Tulunād. The writer has in his possession two manuscripts dated 1886 and 1891 respectively giving a collection of Tulu songs connected with village spirits. These must have taken an enormous amount of patient labour and careful research to collect, verify and edit and need to be studied more carefully.

from the village such epidemics as smallpox and cholera. They also grant children, good harvest and long life to her worshippers.

3. Certain mythologies are invariably connected with the *grāma devatās*. Sometimes as in Tulunād these stories explaining the origin and character of the spirits are exclusively in the village idiom. Sometimes the mythologies present a mixed character and are often confused because they represent attempts to bring the village deity into closer touch with the Hindu gods. A careful study of these mythologies will have certain indications regarding the possible historical origin of the village deities and their possible connection with some of the gods of the Hindu pantheon.

4. The power of the *grāma devatās* is limited to certain localities and to certain functions only. No cosmic functions like creation are attributed to them. On the road side in Telangana was observed a crude idol of Māri obviously being worshipped by the villagers. A cowherd near the place showed scant reverence to the *devatā* and when questioned about his attitude replied that that was not his *amma* and that his *amma* was in the next village. Sometimes a deity is commonly known with reference to the village in which it has a shrine and to which its function and power are limited. Thus for instance, Pannangalatamma is the mother of the village Pannangala and Palurappa is the father of the village Palur.

5. Normally the *grāma devatā* shrines have non-Brahmin priests. But practice varies from place to place. In Tulunād these *pūjāris* are never Brahmins. In Coorg, on the other hand, Brahmins from South Kanara are usually priests at temples dedicated to village deities. In Mysore and the Tamil country normally members of non-Brahmin castes officiate as priests in the *grāma devatā* shrines.

6. Blood sacrifices are invariably associated with the worship or propitiatory ritual of the *grāma devatās*. With the exception of the Malayalam-speaking areas, bull buffaloes are the favourite animals sacrificed to the *grāma devatās*. These sacrifices usually take place during the annual festivals. In Malayalam areas the favourite animals are the pig, goat, sheep and fowl although in other areas also these animals are frequently sacrificed. Māri is particularly fond of buffaloe sacrifice. In recent years the work of political groups and religious bodies have resulted in the decrease of animal sacrifices, but by no means can it be said that animal sacrifices to village gods have now stopped once for all. A goat may be brought to the shrine garlanded and decorated and then taken away for slaughter at home. One should not forget that only fifteen to twenty years ago animal sacrifices were a common feature at many of the shrines and temples of *grāma devatās* and in out-of-the-way villages these practices still continue.

7. Annual festivals are a popular and common feature with the *grāma devatās* . While some such festivals have been studied and described, many local festivals have yet to be studied and their significance in the life of the villager carefully estimated. According to Diehl in Tamilnad a festival to a *grāma devatā* may last for three days. The first day is devoted to the preparation and dedication of the Karakam, the sacred pot. On the second day there will be ceremonies with the flour lamp and on the third day they will have a feast. Sacrifices also may be associated with the annual festivals. Such festivals will be a matter of common interest and help to strengthen the unity and solidarity of the village as a social unit. The significance of these festivals during these days has to be studied carefully. Diehl observes: "In the actual situation of today one must guard against reading too much into the character of the festival....the colour of the festival has nowadays often 'paled' down to a joyful observation for general security's sāke, not to speak of the feelings of joy and devotion it will create in the crowds."[6]

8. An important feature of the *grāma devatās* is the phenomenon of the goddess 'descending' upon selected persons at certain times or taking possession of certain individuals for a period. In the Tamil areas the *grāma devatās* descend (iranku) on their devotees either on the *pūjāri* or on somebody also who is then a *Sāmiyāṭi*, *i.e.*, a god-dancer. Normally they become possessed at festivals only when elaborate preparations are made for the occasion and the god through the one possessed is expected to communicate with the devotees. They act as soothsayers and diviners and are often instrumental in solving the problems of the villagers. The *Sāmiyāṭi* according to Diehl, means a 'god-dancer', not a 'devil-dancer' as the Tamil Lexicon says. Whatever be the significance of this in the Tamil area with which this writer is not familiar, in other areas for example, in the Tulu country, such a person is definitely referred to as a 'devil-dancer'. Such persons are respected and held in esteem by the whole village for the god's or demon's choice of making him a vehicle or instrument.

Dancing is the sign of the presence of the god and is also a means of calling him. The ceremony begins slowly, but gradually the tempo increases and when the time comes for the possession to take place the drums are beaten with increasing rapidity and the movements of the *Sāmiyāṭi* also become jerky and shaky. The moment when the actual possession takes place is always obvious and can last for several hours. During the period of possession he becomes the human medium

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[6] Diehl, *op. cit.*, pp. 179–80.

through whom the god is approachable and is able to give advice on the common problems of daily living in the village.[7]

Ranganath Punja, a lawyer from Mangalore, has given a detailed description of this sort of demon-possession in the Tulu villages of South Kanara.[8] There is considerable evidence that these festivals take place even today in many of the villages. The one who becomes possessed is called '*māni*' (possibly beloved child) or 'pambada' (possible from the words meaning 'sing-song') referring to the invariable practice of such possessed persons singing the history of the particular *devatā* which takes possession of them. Such songs which are well known in the Tulu villages are called 'pardone' (recollection song?). Such persons often walk on fire, cut themselves with swords, etc., possibly to impress the devotees of the validity of the possession. There are established customs observed carefully during these occasions before the '*māni*' starts answering the questions put by the villagers. In one village it is said on sufficient authority, that one of the questions which the '*māni*' himself asks is: "Has the *dorai* come?", which according to the story is a later recognition of the presence of the District Collector.

These occasions, particularly when they are connected with the annual festivals, serve an important purpose in the villages. "The 'god-dancer"', remarks Diehl, "serves as a means of communication between the omniscient deity and ignorant man. It is a channel for man to gain more information on a subject with which he is concerned. There is no question of a spontaneous revelation of divine will. This is not a stage for prophesying but seances arranged for obtaining answers to questions raised by man."[9] During these occasions they try to know the will of the *grāma devatā* or the spirits who are in charge of the village so that, through suitable means they could avert the calamities that might otherwise overtake them in the coming year.

IV

Astrology, Omens and Divination in the Village

Daily life in the villages is a constant encounter with dangers and people are deeply conscious of living in an environment inhabited by spirits. These might leave them without harm if left alone or appeased in the appropriate manner or may bring calamities for faults committed against them knowingly or unknowingly. It therefore becomes neces-

[7] For further details regarding the practice in Tamilnad *see* Diehl, pp. 221 ff.

[8] This article is in Kannada in a book called *Thenkanadu*, published by the Basel Mission Press, 1947.

[9] Diehl, *op. cit.*, pp. 2434–35.

sary to know, if possible beforehand, what brings calamities and once this is known certain remedies can be made use of to avert those calamities. Astrology, omens and divination belong to this realm of diagnosis and magic or *māntrikam* practices belong to the realm of possible remedies.

How to know beforehand the unforeseen? How to find out the course of unpredictable events in life? Astrology is one of these ways. Astrology is by no means confined to village life in India. Many important magazines from film reviews to general periodicals contain sections on ' what the stars foretell this week'. This is one of the areas where village religion comes into close touch with Hinduism because *Jyotişya* is an elaborate Sanskrit technique. It is an extraordinary feature that even in cities, educated people when they open a magazine will first look up the section on stars. The belief that the movement of heavenly bodies has an influence on the course of events on earth seems to be a commonly accepted one. When Nehru made some critical remarks on this subject, Mr. B. V. Raman, the Editor of the *Astrological Magazine*, wrote: " All that is necessary to prove in order to justify astrology is that there is a significant correspondence between the pattern made by planets as they go round the earth and the pattern on thinking, feeling and behaviour of individual human beings."[10] Whether this correspondence is proved or not the daily life and particularly some of the significant crises of life come under what may be described as applied astronomy and astrology. Auspicious days and moments are carefully verified beforehand. Travelling is not undertaken on certain days in certain directions. Weddings are never celebrated without previous consultation with the astrologer as regards the auspicious day and hour. It should be noted that even Christians not only in villages, but quite often in cities as well, surreptitiously find out beforehand the auspicious day before fixing the date of a marriage.

Omens also, properly interpreted, are taken as means to know the unknown future or to discover causes for the unhappy state of affairs at present. The gathering of crows in the middle of a village without an apparent cause might signify something. The chirping of lizards is particularly observed in the villages of South India and interpreted according to its direction and other factors. The howling of dogs, the cries of jackals, the hooting of owls, and many other similar things are taken as omens by the villager. The conception of *Toşam* (Sanskrit *doşa*) meaning malign influence and its effect is generally accepted and attempts are made to avoid it or to counteract its influence. According

[10] Quoted by Diehl, p. 199.

to one book there are 448 different kinds of *Toṣam*. Others speak of nine kinds which constantly threaten children who have to be guarded against them. Killing a snake, particularly a cobra, is a *Toṣam* and the person who does so will suffer from *Sarpa Toṣam* and will be childless.

Divination is the indirect approach to find out the possible cause of calamities. Here the villager lets his own decisions go and submits himself to a third factor to decide the course of events. On the pavements of many cities in India one can find persons with tame parrots trained to pick up a card lying face downwards among the others. Fortune-tellers use various means to explain the cause of present calamities or to foretell future difficulties so that proper remedies might be considered. The god-dancer or devil-dancer in village festivals is also used by the devotees as instruments to find out ways and means to avert calamities. In all these, the purpose of the villager is to find out things which he does not and cannot ordinarily know and the handling of these instruments is obviously ritualistic in character.

V

Village Religion and Magic—Māntirikam

Māntirikam is that which has to do with *mantras*, understood here to mean magical formulæ. It describes a set of practices in the villages in which *mantras* play a large part. The *māntrikar* or the *mantravādi* is the practitioner of this art, a sorcerer or sometimes one who has a demon at his disposal to do good or evil. Practically in every village these people are held in great fear and dread because of the possible harm they could do. The Malayalam *mantravādis* are well known for their remarkable power and are held in great awe in Coorg, South Kanara and possibly in other places as well. In the Tulu country *mātamantra* refers to various forms of black magic and the practitioners of this art are recognised as having power to drive out evil spirits or to control them. In Malabar both the Nambūdiris and the Paraiyans use magic, the former use Sanskrit spells, ghee and coconut in their ritual and the latter use the Malayalam language, cock's blood and formerly palm liquor. But the ritual and the purpose behind it are very much the same. The Moplas also use magic. Sometimes the head of a mosque makes amulets with quotations from the Quran inside them for cure of sickness. They also have a ritual known as *Ratib* to exercise spirits of diseases.

The purpose in the use of these magical rituals varies. Mayer in his study of the land and the people in Malabar gives the following grouping: 25% of magical practices are for hurting or killing one's

enemies; 20% for exorcising demons of diseases; 20% to win illicit love; 10% to gain control or power over others or for detecting thefts; and 4% for economic purposes like the stopping of paddy pests, for getting better yields of paddy or coconuts.[11]

In certain Tamil areas of South India eight forms of black magic are mentioned, *viz.*, (1) to bring a person, spirit of deity under control, (2) to fascinate a person, usually the fascination being libidinous, (3) to drive away or expell an evil spirit or to incite an evil spirit to cause injury to enemies, (4) to arrest or paralyse someone, (5) to invoke an absent person or spirit visibly to one's presence, (6) to create hatred between persons, (7) to cause discord between persons, and (8) *maraṇam* to cause death of someone by incantation of *mantras*. People resort to *māntirikams* when ordinary means fail. It is mainly at the crises of life, periodical or occasional, that the need to make use of spirits is felt and the villager does not hesitate to do so. Going on pilgrimages, making votive offerings, promising to do something if one's desire is fulfilled are all means to achieve the same purpose. Diehl remarks with considerable justification that " one rarely finds a man in India who is not apt to resort to ' super-causation ' at times of grave crises ". Turning to *mantravādis* is one such means. It should be noted that the recruitment to the class of *mantravādis* is not limited to certain groups only, although certain people take to the profession more readily than the others. It is also important to remember that they cross the border of religions. One finds in the villages quite a few Muslims who are *mantravādis*. They simply attend to the needs of individuals and try to help them in times of crises. One should also note that in the ritual practice of village life the line of demarcation between religion and magic cannot be drawn too fine. They often so overlap that a separation may be quite unjustified or unnecessary or even impossible.

Conclusion

It is obvious that village religion, along with the beliefs and practices it accepts and the attitude towards life which it engenders, has a long history and persists in spite of modern influences. Various factors affect contemporary life in the villages of India. The effective schemes for social and economic uplift undertaken by the State and other agencies naturally influence the living conditions of the villagers. Electric lights will make a lot of difference in the dark corners of the village and help considerably to remove the fear of the unknown from the hearts of the villager. Rapid means of communication, the bicycle, the bus and the train, mean closer touch between villages and towns

[11] Adrian C. Mayer, *Land and Society in Malabar*, Oxford, 1952, pp. 41-42.

not only in the physical sense but also psychologically and socially. The touring cinema and the public radio are effective audio-visual aids to widen the horizon of the villagers. All these factors have to be taken into account when making a balanced study of contemporary village religion.

But there are two major factors which will have more lasting influence on the religious attitude of the villager than possibly others. The first is the openly anti-religious propaganda of movements like the Drāvida Kazhagam and Communism which, through a rationalistic approach, try to remove the fear of gods and demons from the minds of the people. The other is the multifarious work of the Welfare State with its schemes for the material well-being of man. Village schools, rural hospitals and irrigation schemes bring quite a few areas of village life from the unpredictable into the controllable scheme of things. To what extent these factors have already affected the religious attitude of the villagers in their deeper sub-conscious levels is a question to which some attention has to be given. In any case, sociologists, anthropologists and rural economists cannot ignore the significance of village religion in rural society. The responsible Christian worker who is deeply concerned to make the power of the Crucified and Risen Lord effective in all areas of human life in the country cannot afford to ignore the basic beliefs and practices of nearly 80% of the people who continue to live in the villages of India.

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THE CHANGING FACE OF THE VILLAGES

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In the year 1948 I spent about ten months making a sociological study of a multi-caste village in Mysore. I shall call it Rampura, and it was about twenty-two miles from Mysore town on the bus route. The headman was very kind and made arrangements for my accommodation.

Within a few days of my arrival, there was much excitement in the village, for the Finance Minister of Mysore State, a member of the newly formed popular Cabinet, was visiting it. It was the first time that a person holding such a high office was visiting Rampura. On the day before his arrival I went round the village with the headman's sons who were bullying the villagers and making them clean up the streets, sweep their homes and arrange their things. On the morning of the Minister's arrival, the swept streets were sprinkled with water, and two decorated arches were erected on the main road. The entire village assembled, led by the headman in a silk coat and laced turban, to greet the dignitary.

The Minister and his party arrived only two hours behind schedule. Two addresses, both of them printed in Mysore, were presented to him: one by the Establishment, consisting of the headman and the other leaders, and the other by a young "dissident" who wore khadi and called himself a Congressman. The first address, after duly showering praises in high-flown Sanskritised Kannada on the Minister, listed the needs of the village: electricity to start industries (unspecified); a new school building and facilities for teaching students up to the lower secondary stage; inclusion of Rampura in the Bannur Health Unit; the loan of a Government bulldozer to level uneven land and of a Government tractor to plough up "dry" (unirrigated) land; a Rama Mandir for Harijans; and a separate school building for Muslims.

The Establishment was presumably upset at the young dissident's decision to submit a separate address. But he was a Congressman and the Congress was in office. The Establishment wanted to prevent

him from becoming a champion of Harijans and Muslims. The last two items were probably intended to take the wind out of his sails.

I do not have space here to go into the background of the addresses and the different interests involved in them, even though these details would be relevant in understanding the changes occurring in Rampura. When the address was being read I told myself, "What a progressive village!" Here indeed was something which was the exact opposite of the conventional picture of villages which educated Indians carried in their heads.

Modernisation

During the same year a young man who was opposed to the headman installed in the village a paddy-huller and flour-mill worked with diesel oil. He had bought a second-hand machine and his neighbours forecast disaster for him. "Who will take ragi to him for making into flour? It is not economical to have paddy husked by a huller and there are mills nearby, only four miles away, in Bannur."

But I did see the old ways change before me. In 1948 I used to wake up early in the morning and hear women, singing songs while they ground ragi on a hand-quern. But by 1952, taking grain to one of the two new rice-mills, powered by electricity, was becoming the rule. The pioneer who brought in the diesel-powered huller sold it eventually for a profit to another similar entrepreneur in a neighbouring village.

The village had altered a little by the summer of 1952. Electricity had come and two peasants had started rice and flour mills, and both were making money. The headman had bought two buses and secured a licence to ply them on two profitable routes. He was also building houses in the prosperous sugar town of Mandya for the purpose of giving them out on rent. Rampura had been included in the Bannur Health Unit. Negotiations were going on about a new school building. A bulldozer was levelling down a part of the headman's big estate.

Nothing had happened, however, about the Rama Mandir for Harijans. They had not yet been allowed to enter the other temples, and they continued to take water from a lower point in the irrigation canal than the high castes, and from another canal carrying water from the tank to the fields below it. They had not tried to assert their right of access to the tank itself.

These changes had all occurred *before* the introduction of the National Community Development Programme on October 2, 1952. (Rampura is still outside the Community Development area.) There

are thousands of villages in India like Rampura in which the availability of water, either through canals, tanks or wells, has enabled the villagers to grow, apart from rice, cash crops such as sugarcane, cotton, tobacco, coconut and arecanut. There are some parts of the country where irrigation methods are several centuries old and agriculture has not been entirely "a gamble on the monsoon". Farming techniques have for a long time been highly developed in these areas, and land-owners are relatively prosperous. Peasants here have traditionally sold their surplus to urban traders for cash. They have also more contact with towns than peasants in unirrigated areas, and they consider themselves more sophisticated than the latter. Many of them say that sophistication came to them with irrigation!

During World War II, when there was a great scarcity of food-grains as well as of other goods, the richer peasants made money. Prices soared, there was inflation, and controls brought in a flourishing black-market. These conditions continued for a few years after the war. It was a period of capital-formation in the more prosperous villages all over the country. Those in whose hands money accumulated in this manner were shrewd people, men of standing in their own villages, land-owners, and, generally, members of the dominant castes who had connections with influential politicians in towns. They were—and are—very sensitive to new economic opportunities and they used—and use—their political connections to strengthen their economic position. (The urban politicians, in turn, depend on these local leaders for votes during elections.)

They are a vigorous and up-and-coming class, and they are unashamedly for private enterprise. They hate controls and bureaucracy, and they do not have any use for an official who is not on their side. They may be members of the Congress or the P.-S.P., but they are at heart Swatantrites. They dislike legislation in favour of tenants, ceilings on landholdings, nationalisation of road transport and co-operative farming. Their opposition is a serious matter, for the Indian rural society is not yet divided on class lines, and patron-client ties are still strong. These leaders do have a following among their caste groups and among their clients.

The leaders are conservative in other respects, too. They are opposed to the emancipation of Harijans. I had several discussions with the headman of Rampura and his friends, and they all held strong views about Harijans being allowed into temples and permitted the use of village wells. They had a feeling that the Harijans were getting above themselves, as a result of the Congress Government's pampering them.

In 1948, in Bihalli, a village about four miles from Rampura, Harijans were beaten up and their huts set fire to because they refused to perform certain traditional services which they considered degrading. In 1954, in a village near Mandya, there was a pitched battle between Harijans and Okkaligas. In 1956–57 violent clashes between Harijans and members of the high castes occurred in Bombay State, and in Ramanathapuram, in Madras. The plain fact is that the bulk of the people in the rural areas are against the removal of untouchability. And as long as the Harijans, a majority of whom are tenants and landless labourers, are economically dependent upon the land-owning high castes, the rights which the Indian Constitution has given them will not be of any practical help.

The economic emancipation of Harijans, if not their employment in towns away from their native villages, is an essential precondition of their social emancipation. Nowadays Harijans have the right to vote, they are getting educated (though not as fast as some would like them to), they are holding Government jobs—in one taluk, I know, almost all the teachers in the rural schools are Harijans—and they are being taught by their leaders to assert their rights. These facts have put the higher castes on the defensive, and there is tension between the two sections. It is likely that in the near future clashes between Harijans and the high castes will become more frequent.

Land Legislation

Recent land legislation has, on the whole, helped the poorer sections of our peasantry. The abolition of *zamindari*, *jagirdari* and *inamdari* has resulted, in many cases, in the transfer of land to the cultivating tenants. The Tenancy Acts passed by the different States have generally given security of tenure and a bigger share of the crop to the tenants. The tenants also have a pre-emptive right if the land-owner wants to sell the land. In fact, land is not as easily and freely saleable as before. In some areas, such as the former Bombay and Hyderabad States, the passing of Tenancy Acts in some cases led to land-owners taking over their land for " personal " cultivation, thus resulting in the tenants' eviction. In the matter of ceilings, however, so much notice has been given to land-owners that many have already formally divided their land to render ineffective any forthcoming legislation.

Many of the changes which are taking place in the rural areas today are the result of forces which have been operative at least since the advent of British rule. The new set-up administered a profound shock to the traditional social system and culture of India. This is a vast subject in itself and is clearly outside the scope of the present essay.

It is sufficient to note, however, that, thanks to the new technology which the British brought with them, the entire subcontinent came effectively under a single ruler for the first time in history. The railway, the telegraph and the printing press brought different parts of the country closer together.

The improvement in communications also helped in making India a part of the British colonial economy. India became a supplier of raw materials to Great Britain. The pattern of Indian agriculture underwent a change, areas growing commercial crops becoming responsive to changes in the overseas economy. Even prior to that the British had introduced great changes in the Indian agricultural economy by making zamindars, who were mere revenue-collectors, the *owners* of land, and by insisting that the land-tax should be paid in cash instead of in grain. Handicrafts, and in particular weaving, decayed rapidly, and India became an importer of cloth.

The system of justice which the British introduced was novel. It was based on the idea of equality of all men in the eyes of the law: this meant that the caste of the litigants was irrelevant in determining the nature of the crime or the punishment to be awarded. The rural folk did not understand the procedures of the British law courts, but they made use of them all the same. The existence of higher courts of appeal, which occasionally reversed the decisions of the lower courts, induced the peasants to go from one court to another till victory came to them. The chief beneficiaries of this process were the urban lawyers.

The introduction of Western medicine, the discovery of new drugs which prevented the spread of epidemics such as the plague, cholera and smallpox, the establishment of hospitals and the creation of a famine-fighting organisation, while they brought various benefits, helped in the gradual growth of population. The irrigated areas were able to cope with this increase slightly better than the unirrigated areas. In the former, the ranks of the agricultural labourers and poor tenants swelled, whereas in the latter case migration was the only remedy. Migration was both internal and international. People went to the coffee, tea and rubber estates in Assam, the Nilgiris, Coorg, etc., and to cities such as Bombay, Calcutta, Madras and Jamshedpur as well as to Burma, Ceylon, Malaya and South Africa. In this movement of the population the "push" from the overpopulated and poverty-stricken rural areas was perhaps more significant than the "pull" of the new towns.

It is important to note that though the higher castes were generally the beneficiaries of British rule, occasionally the advantages went to a low caste which, because of its traditional occupation, was placed in

a better position to exploit the new economic opportunities. For instance, in Bisipara, a village in Phullbani District, Orissa, two distiller castes, one of them an immigrant community, made money from trading in liquor. In pre-British Bisipara, the Kshatriyas owned all the land, but by 1910 the bulk of the holdings had passed into the hands of the two distiller castes. Land-ownership gave them prestige and enabled them to improve their way of life. Their position in the caste hierarchy went up.

This "self-improvement" process is widespread in modern India, especially in the rural areas. A "low" caste whose members have acquired money or political power borrows the customs, rituals and way of life of the Brahmins in an effort to claim a status higher than the community has been hitherto willing to concede to it. Quite apart from this, however, the way of life and culture of India are becoming increasingly more "refined". The newspapers which educated villagers read, the films which they see, the radio which they listen to and the text-books which their children study all help to spread the process.

Westernisation is another influence in our villages, though it is more pronounced in our cities and among the upper classes. Villagers crave for urban amenities and gadgets. Wrist-watches, fountain pens, electric torches and the wearing of shirts and trousers have become symbols of prestige. The sons of the richer villagers are becoming Westernised in a deeper sense: they spend many years in towns studying science, medicine and technology. They set the pattern for the other villagers.

The advent of freedom released a number of forces making for radical changes in the rural areas. The introduction of universal adult suffrage is a revolutionary measure which has placed a powerful weapon in the hands of the traditionally underprivileged sections of our country's population—villagers, women, Harijans and the so-called "low" castes. I have already referred to land and tenancy legislation. The Panchayat Acts passed by every State formally confer power and resources on village panchayats and introduce a new principle, namely open election of members, in place of the old one based on caste, land-ownership and hereditary succession. (In a good many villages today there are two panchayats, one formed under a Government Act and another which is traditional.)

The Constitutional abolition of untouchability and the passing of the relevant legislation in 1955 have more than symbolic significance. Their importance is likely to increase further in the near future. The

abolition of the princely order has resulted in the withdrawal of political support to feudal-hierarchical cliques in the rural areas.

The Five-Year Plans, which represent a tremendous, sustained and systematic effort to develop every aspect of the economy of the country, have left their mark on the villages. In the 1950–56 period, for instance, the net area sown increased by nearly 25 million acres, while the net irrigated area rose by about 5 million acres. Agricultural production has increased all over the country. The increased prices for foodgrains in the fifties have resulted in an improved standard of living for all sections of the rural population, excepting agricultural labourers, who constitute nearly 30%. Rural indebtedness has decreased.

The Community Development Programme, inaugurated in October 1952, is an expression of the concern of the people, the Government and the ruling party for the all-round development of our villages. It aims to provide, "first, increased employment and increased production by the application of scientific methods of agriculture, including horticulture, animal husbandry, fisheries, etc., and the establishment of subsidiary and cottage industries; secondly, self-help and self-reliance and the largest possible extension of the principle of co-operation; and thirdly, the need for devoting a portion of the vast unutilised time and energy in the countryside for the benefit of the community".

At present there are two thousand Development Blocks, each one consisting of a hundred villages, and they serve about 194 million villagers. It is expected that by the end of the Second Five-Year Plan there will be 3,100 blocks covering four lakhs of villages. Each one of India's 560,000 villages is expected to come under the Community Development Programme by October, 1963. A huge administrative machinery, engaging hundreds of officials including the *grām sevak* units at the base has been created. Villagers are beginning to be aware of the fact that there is a governmental organisation charged with the responsibility for rural development.

Development Programme

In the year 1956–57 Parliament set up a committee headed by Mr. Balwantrai Mehta to inquire into the working of the Community Development Programme. Its report, published in December, 1957, contained several significant criticisms. It was pointed out that food production had not risen sufficiently in the Development areas. The average increase was 10·8%, the minimum being 2·7% and the maximum (in Andhra Pradesh) being 41·4%. It was suggested that more attention be paid to agriculture. The committee also found that benefits

such as the supply of good seeds, manure and fertilisers and aid in improved methods of cultivation had gone mostly to the large and medium cultivators: 66% of the large owner-cultivators, 46% of the medium owner-cultivators and 22% of the small owner-cultivators had benefited from the programme for better agriculture.

In the matter of agricultural loans, cultivators benefited much more than non-cultivators. The former had land to offer as security and the loan-giving authorities were used to giving loans on land and not on other securities. The insistence on the provision of a security means that the poorest sections of the rural people are excluded from receiving aid. Even among owners, the large and medium cultivators have benefited more than the small cultivator.

Again, backward groups like Harijans have benefited very little from the loans. The panchayats are dominated by members of the influential land-owning castes. And loans are more easily given to relations, friends and caste fellows of the members of the panchayat.

The introduction of Panchayat Raj is likely, at least initially, to strengthen further the position of the land-owning castes. But the policy of giving greater power to the panchayats is the right one if the present tendency to rely on the Government for everything is to be combated. It is a matter of common observation that a sense of dependence on the Government had increased with the coming of the Community Development Programme.

The Development officials, in their understandable eagerness to achieve the set targets and to show quick results, have been compelled to ignore the less tangible but more important aim of teaching the villagers to help themselves. The peasants have to be taught that there are resources at their disposal—such as their own capacity for hard work, their skill, initiative and loyalty to the community and the region. This objective can be realised only by proper local leadership. It was with a view to tapping this hidden asset that the Mehta Committee recommended the creation of " statutory local bodies and distribution to them of the necessary resources, power and authority ". Panchayat Raj has already been introduced in Rajasthan and Andhra Pradesh, and Madras is likely to follow suit soon.

India's villages have been changing for well over a hundred years. This fact has been obscured by the myths which educated Indians, and foreigners have perpetrated about them. Since Independence, the Government has launched a vast programme of developing the country as a whole—and agriculture in particular. The gigantic hydroelectric projects as well as the minor irrigation works, the development of transport facilities, the determined effort to industrialise the country, the

Community Development Programme and the policy of decentralisation will ensure that in the not-too-distant future India's villages will change radically.

In spite of the fact that the Indian towns and cities have been taking away the cream of the rural population for the last sixty years or more, our villages still contain many shrewd, intelligent and capable people. This rural elite is strongly entrenched at the present moment and represents the channel through which the development programme reaches India's myriad villages. If I may mix metaphors, the channel is also a barrier preventing benefits from reaching the poorer folk living in the rural areas. It is likely that soon it may become more and more of a barrier and less and less of a channel. If this happens our villages will become arenas for a new and country-wide struggle. It is the task of statesmanship to try to avoid the materialisation of such an eventuality.

VILLAGE RELIGIOUS IDEAS AND PRACTICES AMONG CHRISTIANS

By The Rev. P. Y. Luke

At the Pastorate headquarters in Wadiaram, a village in the Medak Diocese, there is a shrine of the local goddess "Mankali" right inside the Church compound just behind the Pastorate Church Hall, where the villagers perform their Hindu ceremonies on various occasions. This Church compound is popularly known as "Mankali Compound". This is symbolic of the spiritual condition of our village Christians in this area. Both Christian and village religious beliefs and practices exist side by side among the Christians. The basic problem therefore is the willingness of Christians to have both Christianity and Village Religion.

In Kondapuram, a village near Medak, one washerman attends Christian worship quite regularly, but when challenged with the question of baptism, he said that he could not possibly do that because of the religious duties he had to perform on behalf of the village. Then the elder of the congregation (a member of the Pastorate Committee) remarked almost instinctively, "It does not matter. You can do both. We are doing the same and yet we are Christians. We do our traditional duties at the village ceremonies except that we do not eat the meat offered to idols". They want to have Christian names as well as Hindu and Muslim names. They tie a cross round their necks and on the same thread they will have also a Hindu charm or talisman. They give a thank-offering to Christ in the Church and also pay their traditional beggars a considerable sum of money. They worship Christ in the Church, and also offer a chicken to Poshamma (the goddess of smallpox). They respect the presbyter as their *guru* and bring him to the catechist's house through the village in great procession, yet they consult the Brahmin about auspicious days and hours and about astronomical calculations and horoscopes for all practical purposes. They keep the picture of Jesus Christ in their houses and also keep their household goddess "Balamma" or "Ellamma". They do not want to incur the displeasure or wrath of either "Yesu Sami" or "Mankali goddess". They celebrate twelve or thirteen Hindu festivals, one Muslim festival (Muharram) and two Christian festivals.

In one village, a Christian woman one day had an acute stomach pain due to some menstrual disorder. The other women of that home invited me to pray with her. But when I went to them I found the

sacred ashes of Kamudu (which they took on the Holi festival day from the bonfire and preserved) smeared all over her body to ward off the evil spirits.

This fits in with the Hindu attitude towards the sect. Each sect may have its 'Ishta Devata', but accept to some extent or at least tolerate other sects, venerating their gods as well as acknowledging the whole host of lesser gods or spirits. This hospitable attitude and tolerant spirit of village Hinduism made it much easier for the Church to start work in this area.

It is not the presence of these village religious beliefs and practices among Christianity, but their persistence without change even after fifty years of Christianity in a particular village which constitutes the problem for the Church. If their attitude is not changed, then Christianity would eventually become a sect of village Hinduism or village religion—like the Baljis or Visva Brahmas. It is lack of systematic teaching on the part of presbyters and evangelists that is mainly responsible for this situation. Only occasional efforts are being made by the Church to check these tendencies. It depends chiefly upon the enthusiasm of the resident catechist. In many cases the evangelists are reticent about this, because they do not want to risk offending the Christians. If they interfere, then the Christians would not come for divine worship or give collections.

Christian Names

Among the village people in this area, the names of persons have a religious significance attached to them. In a way the child names itself according to the circumstances under which it is born. If the children die in quick succession a short while after they are born, the mother places the child immediately after it is born on the earth, and if that child survives then the parents name the child as Bhumi, if it is a girl (which means given to the goddess of earth), or Bhumadu if it is a boy, which means the same. If a woman is barren and has no children for some years, she worships some god or goddess and then if a child is born, she will name the child after that particular god or goddess after the worship of which the child is born. Even in normal cases usually the older women stand by the side of the mother at the time of her delivery and go on reciting the names of various gods or goddesses they can remember, and the child is named after the god or goddess at the repetition of whose name it is born. According to their vows made under such various circumstances or crises the parents officially give the names to their children at the naming ceremony usually held on the twenty-first day of the child's birth (*pūrūdū*). If they break their

vows or change their names they fear that those gods or goddesses will get angry and send some calamity upon them.

At the time of baptism when the presbyter gives Christian names the village Christians accept them but at the same time keep their original non-Christian names. They do not understand the significance of Christian names, and they regard them as an appendix. They call each other in their ordinary conversations by their Hindu names and when talking to a presbyter or an evangelist they give their Christian names. Some do not even know their Christian names and when asked they answer, "I do not know; the evangelist knows", and others answer, "Which name? Is it the name in your religion, or the name which my parents gave?" But when applying to the government for land or other concessions offered to the Harijans, they give their Hindu names, whether or not with an easy conscience.

Christian and Non-Christian Marriages

It is often found in our villages that Christian girls after being nurtured and instructed in the Christian faith in the church for more than twelve years at their parents' homes are given in marriage to non-Christian boys in other villages and they are lost to the church. Being surrounded by heathen influence in their parents-in-law's homes, they join in all the traditional practices and ceremonies with their husbands. But in the case of non-Christian girls married into Christian families in the congregation, the church is confronted with another problem. These non-Christian girls when they are married to Christian boys are eventually baptised. These girls who have had completely a non-Christian background until their marriage become the mothers of children in the Christian congregation, they not only keep up the secret practice of heathen rites but also hand them on to their children, because in all the heathen ceremonies, festivals and weddings village women occupy a pivotal position and take more active part in them than men.

The Christians do not make a deliberate attempt to go in search of Christian partners to their children, because their main criteria in seeking partners for their children are wealth of the family, purity of the caste, health of the family and first cousin relatives; aside from the pressure of the non-Christian relatives the Christian parents themselves insist on solemnising their marriages according to traditional rites. They do not want to give up the non-Christian rites and practices however noble and dignified the Christian marriage ceremony may be. Therefore they perform these heathen rites either before or after the presbyter solemnizes the marriages according to Christian rites. There is still that fear lurking in their subconscious minds of consequence

that might befall the married couple if they did not perform the non-Christian rites. One elder, Daniel of Rayelli Village, reported in a Pastorate Committee meeting about a marriage arranged in his village. He said, "We married a couple in our village where parents did not have them use *Bāshingālu* (an indispensable decoration made of coloured paper and tied to the foreheads of the couple covering their eyes in the form of the hood of a cobra). But the boy died after this marriage, so our Christians attribute this to not using *Bāshingālu* at the wedding and hesitate to allow the marriages to be solemnized without *Bāshingālu*".

Participation of Christians in the Village Festivals and Village Religious Ceremonies

It is true that these Christians being surrounded by heathen influence are driven to resort to traditional practices. It is also true that when the non-Christian children wear new clothes and eat rich food on their festival days they have to entertain their children in the same way on the same festival days. But many Christians take part in the heathen festivals and rites as a matter of course without any scruples or uneasy conscience, because they do not regard idolatry as sin. But they are aware that these things are wrong because the catechist or the pastor does not like their idolatrous practices. One Church elder said, "Such heathen practices persist among all Christians in other villages and other Pastorates in the Diocese. Why should we stop doing them while others continue to do them? If they stop them we also will stop."

Except in some rare cases most of the Christians take part in all the calendar and agricultural festivals and attend village religious fairs or *jāthras* and Muslim *urs*. In times of illness or distress they perform family and individual *pūja* to the *grāma devatās*. The use of amulets, talismans and charms to scare away evil spirits is general among Christians. The domestic ceremonies connected with the life-cycle, *i.e.*, births, coming of age, marriages and deaths are also observed. Christian married women use *bottu* (a dot on the forehead painted with vermillion or saffron powder) in all religious festivals and ceremonies, and at every stage of marriage negotiations and wedding ceremonies, which they find it hard to resist or refuse to have it on. Christian men still have *zuttu* (a tuft of hair on the crown of their heads). In the homes of Christians we invariably find the goddess Balamma in a niche in the outside wall and images of goddess Ellamma are also kept inside their houses. The image of the goddess Ellamma is always found carved on the landas (big earthen pots where they tan the hides

of cattle). Christian women become possessed by a god or goddess and take active part in the village ceremonies and in sooth-saying.

The Christian young men participate in Chiruthala Ramayanam, the dramatic dance based on the stories of the Hindu epic, Ramayana. They are a great attraction to our youth in the villages. This is more or less like *Kolātam*, but instead of sticks they use wooden cymbals (chiruthala). They dance while singing in a rhythmic pattern and striking the cymbals led by a leader.

Christians join in the *grāma devatā pūja* on special occasions when an epidemic breaks out in a village, and also in the annual village ceremonies. Some of the Malas and Madigas have traditional duties to perform at these functions. A *neerudu* (whose duty is to watch over village tanks) officiates at the pig sacrifices to goddesses, and a *pedda* Methar or Chowdari (Madiga caste headman) officiates at the buffalo sacrifices. Madigas beat drums at these ceremonies. For all these and other menial services rendered by the Malas and Madigas in the village they are given some gift land by the Government, and so they have to oblige village people in fulfilling their traditional duties lest they lose all their traditional perquisites.

Each family in the whole village will have to pay its share of contributions fixed by the village headmen for *grāma devatā pūja* at the time of special ceremonies and also towards renovating village shrines. The question of contributions to village goddesses or festivals to most of the villagers seems a mere matter of social duty. But to the convinced Christian it may appear as participation in idolatry. Many Christians pay these contributions quite freely.

Influence of Village Religious Ideas

When the gospel first came to these villages and when the new converts were baptized, they may have accepted a new god at baptism, but they have accepted him as a god of the same type as that to which they have been accustomed, wiser perhaps, kinder, less capricious but still a god fashioned by man in his own image; *i.e.*, dēva (*not* dēvatā)—*swāmi* or *avatār*. Their conception of the Christian God has not grown or changed since baptism. Moreover their decision to become Christians was a group decision and was influenced by material benefits. Most of the village Christians think of Christianity in terms of material benefits. They expect that if they believed in Jesus Christ and worship Him, He would heal the sick, bless their family and keep it from all troubles and misfortunes, bless their crops and cattle and give success in all their undertakings.

There is also a genuine piety about a few of the Christians in the villages. No one can doubt the working of the new leaven and the working of the Holy Spirit. We find a core of such strong and devoted Christians in every congregation. They stand firm in their faith even under difficult circumstances and give strong witness among the other Christians as well as the non-Christians in their villages.

Adaptation of Village Religious Customs in Christianity

(*a*) *Use of the Cross.*—The village congregations have shown a capacity for spontaneous adaptation of village customs and practices in Christian ceremonies. In some congregations they paint a cross in red on the outside walls and doorposts of their houses to show that they are Christian families and also to ward off evil spirits. The crosses some children wear around their necks have the same function.

(*b*) *Use of the Bible.*—In Achampet village I found that the Bible was used in the wedding ceremony. According to the heathen custom the bridegroom's party goes to meet the bridal party carrying an earthen pot containing porridge. But instead of this, Christians carried the Bible from the evangelists' house in a great procession to the place of meeting where they welcomed the bridal party. In another village the Christians used the Bible at a funeral ceremony. Instead of an earthen pot containing fire, the son of the deceased person who performs the last duties to the deceased person carried the Bible in one hand and a wooden cross in the other in front of the funeral procession.

(*c*) *Pictures of Christ.*—The pictures of Christ (often Roman Catholic—Christ on the Cross and Christ with the Sacred Heart) which are placed over the doorway are expected to bring the presence of Jesus in their homes to ward off evil spirits and to give material blessings (*barkath*).

(*d*) *Jesus Christ.*—The village Christians in Achampet greet the pastor or evangelist with the word Jai Christu (victory to Christ) which is an adaptation of the nationalist greeting after Independence, Jai Hind (victory to India).

(*f*) Annual *jāthras* or *melas* have become part of our village Church life. They are an effective means of creating a corporate consciousness and they appeal to the genius of the people. The main programme of a *jāthra* takes place on the first night itself. At that time the Christian women carry their little oil-saucer lamps in their hands and singing appropriate lyrics go round the cross and illumine it, and at the end of the service *prasādam* will be distributed to the Christians and non-Christians present at the service.

(*g*) In presenting the Gospel to the village people the indigenous methods of *Kālakshepam*, *Burra kathas* and Christian dramas are being used by our Christians. At nights village Christians perform folk dances —*Kolātam* (stick dance) by men, and *kummi* (group dance) by women while singing Christian lyrics.

Conclusion

The day of the breaking of idols is always a memorable day. Yet such enthusiastic beginnings often lead on to disappointment on both sides. The village Christians may have acted without any full understanding of the weight of the yoke that they have taken on themselves. The pastor, on the other hand, seeing that his converts go on in ways that belie their Christian profession, often wonders whether there was any deep sincerity in the original decision to accept the Gospel. It is easy for the underlying cause of it to be overlooked. But unless the dark world of the village Christians has been brought out into the light of day, fully placed and deliberately abandoned in reliance on the power of Christ to overcome all the powers of darkness, it is much more likely that it will continue to exercise its power as an unspoken and unconscious influence in the life of village Christians. A change in names signifies little unless the original concept of God has been transformed after the likeness of Jesus Christ through the working of the Holy Spirit in the inner consciousness of simple men. The evil dwelling now on the subconscious level cannot be cast out by exhortation or discipline but only by the penetration of light and grace into the inner recesses of our village Christians.

GRĀMA DEVATĀ WORSHIP AND SANĀTANA DHARMA*

By Prof. M. Yamunacharya

Grāma devatā is the name given to the village deity which is being worshipped in the villages practically all over India. Each village has its own village deity which is the guardian angel of the village. The village deity is ordinarily a goddess, a mother deity who protects the people in the village as a mother would protect her children. She is beneficent to the people so long as they live a life of *dharma*, the contravention of which would bring down the wrath of the goddess. The villagers live in dread of this wrath and are keen in propitiating the deity in accordance with the prescribed ritual. Jātrās are held in her name, sacrifices are offered, feasts and festivals are celebrated. The *grāma devatā* is believed to be a deity of great potency as she is a manifestation of the primal Power-Goddess, *Ādi Śakti*. She has great power in warding off the evils due to evil powers, ghosts and goblins, epidemics and natural calamities.

The *grāma devatā* fulfils also another function. It is that of being a symbol of social solidarity of the village and its people. The *grāma devatā* is the people's conscience and the guardian of the moral and social order.

In the hierarchy of the deities that are worshipped by the Hindu the *grāma devatā* is a special functionary who is no substitute to the Supreme Being, and who has the Supreme Being as immanent or *antaryāmi* in her. This is the reason why the Hindu, even the most enlightened one, can ordinarily reconcile himself to the worship of the *grāma devatā* without giving up his faith in a Supreme Being, be it Śiva or Vishṇu who is the *Devādeva*, the God of gods. In other words, the other deities are godlings who have been assigned specific functions to fulfil, beyond which they cease to have their jurisdiction.

Sanātana dharma by which the higher Hinduism has been called has sought the reconciliation in its own way between the multiplicity of deities connoted by the *grāma devatā* worship and the monotheism which holds on to one Supreme God (*Viśvesvara*), who is immanent equally in the external cosmos, in the different gods and goddesses and in the heart of man. The *grāma devatās* and other popular

* Substance of a lecture delivered by the author at the Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society.

deities are looked upon as so many functionaries discharging their assigned functions in the manner that separate officials with specific duties assigned to them discharge their duties and responsibilities owning their allegiance to one common ruler, abiding by his governance and the laws laid down by him.

Another notion implicit in *Sanātana dharma* in this particular regard is that each one of these deities is able to grant a specific kind of boon which, if desired, would necessitate the propitiation of that deity. But none of them is thought to be capable of granting salvation or *moksha* which the Supreme Being alone is capable of granting. Therefore no seeker of salvation or final liberation will or can go to these deities for the satisfaction of their aspiration for *moksha*. The *mumukshu* or the seeker for salvation has no necessity of resorting to these deities. In fact he has to renounce them not because they are unreal but because they are inherently unable to grant what he wishes. In certain sects of Hinduism *devatāntara parityāga* or renunciation of other deities is held to be *conditio sine qua non* of the stepping on to the path of *moksha* or salvation. But the aspirants to *moksha* are few and far between. What suits them may not suit the others who have other aims or ends in life to seek. It all depends on the level of spirituality attained by a particular individual. *Sanātana dharma* accepts what it calls the principle of *iṣṭadevata* or the deity desired and *adhikāri bheda* or difference in fitness. On this basis it is even regarded as unwise for the follower of *Sanātana dharma* prematurely to disturb the faith reposed in the different *devatās* for the fulfilment of the purpose for which the worship of the *devatās* is sought. The *Gītā* expresses this idea in the verse (Ch. III, 26) :

na buddhibhedam janayed
ajnānām karmasaṅginām
joṣayet sarvakarmāṇi
vidvān yuktaḥ samācaran

Its purport is:

The wise man should not disturb the faith of those who are yet unknowing and who are involved in the concerned ritual. The wise man must himself participate in those ritualistic acts in a discriminating way and induct them in doing them.

The object of participation is not to confirm them in what they do but to gradually wean them from the lower aims towards the higher aims, without uprooting them radically from their social and cultural setting. The mental attitude of sincere faith and devotion is in itself such a valuable thing that a thoughtless attempt to undermine it is considered to be unwise. One good thing, from the point of view of higher

spirituality, in the worship of these minor deities, is the constant consciousness it fosters of the reality of invisible powers, which are not unreal merely because they are incapable of being perceived by the senses or understood by logical reasoning but comprehended by the eye of faith alone. The faith (*śraddhā*) and devotion (*bhakti*) involved in these forms of worship are invaluable qualities and they have to be gradually chastened, purified and sublimated and not eradicated, suppressed or repressed. This in general is the *Sanātana dharma* point of view regarding the worship of the *grāma devatās.*

Chapter VII of the *Bhagavad Gītā* clinches the whole issue in three verses (Ch. VII, 21–23) that run as follows:

yo-yo yāṃ-yāṃ tanuṃ bhaktaḥ
śraddhayā 'rcitam icchati
tasya-tasyā 'calāṃ śraddhāṃ
tāṃ eva vidadhāmy aham

sa tayā śraddhayā yuktas
tasyā 'rādhanam ihate
labhate ca tataḥ kāmān
mayai 'va vihitān hi tān

antavat tu phalaṃ teṣāṃ
tad bhavaty alpamedhasām
devān devayajo yānti
madbhaktā yānti mām api

The meaning is:

Anyone who desires to worship whatever of these deities with devotion and faith receives my sanction for worshipping them in so far as his devotion remains sincere and steady. Imbued with such faith, he, who desires to worship these deities, will obtain, as ordained by me, his desires; but such desires as are attained by him remain evanescent or transitory and bespeak little-mindedness. No doubt the worshippers of these gods reach them whereas my devotees reach me.

Again, from the point of view of *Sanātana dharma* a distinction has been drawn between three modes of Faith which are termed as the Sātvik, Rājasic and Tāmasic modes. We find a delineation of the characteristics of the respective modes in the *Bhagavad Gītā* which is the text of *Sanātana dharma.* The relevent verses (Ch. XVII, Slokas 2–3) run thus:

trividhā bhavati śraddhā
dehināṃ sā svabhāvajā
sāttvikī rājasī cai 'va
tāmasīce' ti tāṃ śṛṇu

sattvānurūpā sarvasya
śraddhā bhavati bhārata
śraddhāmayo 'yaṃ puruṣo
yo yacchraddhaḥ sa eva saḥ

The meaning is:

Faith falls into three divisions, for the embodied beings, engendered by their own psychological nature. They are the Sātvik, Rājasic and Tāmasic. Listen O Bharata, the faith of every man is in accord with his innate character; man is made up of faiths; whatever his object of faith even so is he. Sātvik persons worship the gods; Rājasic ones, the Yakshas and Rākshasas; and the Tāmasic ones worship manes, or spirits.

And yet these different forms of faith are capable of being transmuted when they are all embarked upon as the worship of the several forms of manifestation of one and the same Supreme Being and when they 'cease to be violations of the scriptural injunctions' '*yah śāstra vidhim utssujya*'. It is at this juncture that the *Gītā* propounds its characteristic doctrine that whosoever approaches God through any of these diverse ways, treads the path that ultimately leads to the Supreme Being. Another well-known verse from one of the *purāṇās* that breathes the same spirit expresses the idea that as tastes differ, men tread diverse ways that suit their temperaments, all purporting to finally lead to one and the same Supreme Being. These diverse modes of worship are likened to diverse rivers some of which flow straight and others flow meandering but finally finding their way into a common sea. The simile of rivers and Ocean in this context is an idea that has a peculiar fascination to the Hindu mind. It affords the key to reconciliation of rival sectarian claims within the matrix of Hinduism.

MINISTERING TO RURAL PEOPLE

By The Rev. C. Murray Rogers

I suppose every one of us who have been called by God to the ministry of Christ's Church hear an echo of agreement from within ourselves when St. Paul, writing to Christian friends in Corinth, says: "Indeed we want to prove ourselves genuine ministers of God whatever we have to go through" (II Corinthians 6: 4. J. B. Philips). Yes, indeed, we do, we say, but what exactly is involved? What are the marks of a minister of Christ? True enough the ground of our existence at all as ministers rests on the fact that God has chosen us and we have not chosen Him (St. John 15: 16). That being so, we go on to ask more questions: what does He want of us? How may we best live the life which He has chosen for us? What sort of men are the true ministers of Christ?

These questions are made more pointed when we ask them not in a general sense but specifically with country people in mind. We rural ministers are speaking and we say: "Indeed we want to prove ourselves genuine ministers of God to the village people of our country" and, we add, "whatever we have to go through".

God chooses us and provides—there where we are—the food by which we and our neighbours may live; the Good News of all that God has done and does for us human beings in Christ, and His presence among us and in us in His Word and Sacraments. Given this, which is everything, the Church received her mission to transform by the Holy Spirit every man, every people, every culture, and to consecrate them to the Father. This is the *Pleroma Christi*, the Fulness of Christ; this is the vision Isaiah saw—however distantly—when he wrote: "Then you shall see and be radiant, your heart shall thrill and rejoice; because the abundance of the sea shall be turned to you, the wealth of the nations shall come to you" (Isaiah 60: 5).

Unless we see Christ's ministry to rural people in this magnificent totality, with all its complexity and depth, leading to this splendid *denoûement*, we will never enter into the splendour of our calling to be His ministers in one small corner of the world. Precisely because God has put all things under Christ's feet (Ephesians 1: 22), His ministry through me must be to all things, to all people, to every sphere of life in the village where I live. My ministry cannot be truly narrowed down to that part of the whole which at present calls itself Christian;

I cannot truly say that my responsibility is for some rather than for others, for certain areas of life rather than for others, even less dare I say that Christ's reign relates to the next life rather than to this as if He rules in heaven but not on earth. There, in the Fulness of Christ, we are given the dimensions of our calling.

In this fact we see how Christ puts us into the middle of life, into the main stream of national life and interests. Far from contracting out of whatever is happening today in rural society—from the break-up of the Hindu joint family to the multiple concerns of Community Development and the industrialization of agriculture—Christ's minister knows that this is the place where God is at work through His Church drawing all men and things to Himself. The Churchmen who asked last year, "Who is this Bhave?", no doubt might be considered very "spiritual" but not very Christian! To be ignorant—beyond the confines of time and lack of gifts—is a denial of Christ's rule and of Christ's fulness.

I may, in fact I must, say with St. Paul: "All things are yours, and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's" (I Cor. 3: 21 and 22). And that being true no part of the community in which I live, be they Hindus, Moslems, atheists—be they rogues, tiny children, old men—are outside Christ's concern. My concern cannot be less wide than His.

Does this mean, as has been suggested by some, that a rural minister must know about everything from plumbing to artificial fertilisers, from medical science to sociology, with, of course, the Word and the Sacraments thrown in? By no means. His task is not to be a *gram sathi* of an improved type because he includes the spiritual in his bag of wares, he adds prayer to advice on better seed. To say that every part of village society and life is the minister's care and concern is *not* to say that he is called to do every other person's job, to be a maid of all work. I hope this will become plainly apparent before I end.

Dr. A Nairne of Cambridge University used to say of Christian ministers that they are called "in respect to men to stand on the Godward side and in respect to God to stand on the manward side". I believe he was profoundly right and therein I know too how far short I myself fall in fulfilling my calling.

1. *In respect to men to stand on the Godward side*

We are called to be men who know God, who enjoy Him. Others, our neighbours and parishioners, have a right to find reflected in us God's presence, Christ's mind, the Spirit's life. This is the very centre of our *being* a servant of Christ and it will mean that very much of our time will be spent in worship, in prayer, in meditation, in being silent before

God. We will spend a large part of each day this way not because we ought to, nor because this is the way to do effective Christian work, but because we cannot help it; it is our life and we love it this way.

We will not necessarily be known as men who in the village or fields are continually talking about God—though it does not embarrass us in any way to do so—but we will be known to be men who are continually praising God, who notice and enjoy all lovely and beautiful things, men who find it possible, yet natural, to rejoice at every turn, in every circumstance.

"On the Godward side": this comes first in our ministry and it is largely hidden. Early in the morning, may be alone or perhaps with one or two others, we will be worshipping. As always we are not alone for our little love is joined to the love and worship of the angels and archangels; and, on another account, we are not alone for our village neighbours, believers and unbelievers alike, are there with us and in us. The Reformed Church of France, one of whose prayer-books has this prayer in it, knows what I am now trying to say:

> Lord, we are here before Thee this morning. We await the revelation of Thy presence more eagerly than sentries await the dawn. We come before sunrise to worship Thee, O Eternal Father. We come in the name of our village friends who are still asleep.... with them, for them, in the name of them all, belonging to each one in Thy Holy Spirit. We are here this morning in the silence so that Thy praise may rise from these villages in our worship and adoration; so that here creation may respond to Thy love and sing the glory of Thy Name; so that here the world may not be dumb but may take up the Alleluia: Hosanna, blessed be the Lord![1]

In that prayer of French rural ministers came the word, *presence*. I believe that the practice of the presence of God is somewhere very near the centre of our life as ministers, to be becoming more and more continually conscious that Christ, our Lord, is with us, with the other man, that every time I touch or see water I am touching His gift, that every time I see or receive a kindness, a smile, Christ is offering His love to me. Make me aware, Lord, that when I meet one of Your children, when I get enmeshed in Your material world, that I am touching the very mantle of Your robe.

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin was speaking of this when he wrote: "I grew more and more conscious, less as an abstract notion than as a *presence*, of a profound, ontological total drift of the Universe around me; so conscious of this that it filled my whole horizon."[2] Brother Lawrence's little book, *The Practice of the Presence of God* and Teilhard de Chardin's *Le Milieu Divin: An Essay on the Interior Life*[3] are the

best I know on this subject, but it is not books we need but the practice and the joy and the strength which comes surely enough from the practice of the Presence. There is in my mind not the smallest shadow of doubt but that the best gift we can offer to our neighbours is to live near to God, to discover ourselves being given a deep faith, a sure hold on God Himself as the most real of all realities.

In this country particularly whose religious traditions have within them some especially precious gifts related to contemplation and mystical experience we ministers are expected primarily to be men of religious experience, men of prayer, and although westernised Indian tradition may be expecting us now to prove our worth by action, by external work, by doing things, yet I am persuaded that the deeper, more genuine Indian tradition, is the true one. In the long run the integrity of our ministry, the genuineness of our life, depends on our hidden, inner life with God.

I have emphasised this Godward side for it is, I believe, still largely forgotten. You will know how far your colleges introduce men to the life of prayer, to the joy of longing to know Him and to be lost in His love. May be it was my own blindness, may be it was partly my teacher's fault, but it remains a regret that the centrality of God, of His presence in prayer, in the Holy Communion, in the happenings and meetings of any day, has only in recent years in India begun to become the joy of my life.

You will not, I hope, take it that I in anyway minimise theological thinking and learning but *that*—however good and however thorough—is no substitute for living experience of God; nor is there any guarantee that a sound intellectual grounding in theology will necessarily involve a deep and growing life of prayer. It is this last which, I venture to think, is the largely neglected area of training today and with almost fatal results to large areas of the Church's life.

2. *In respect to God to stand on the manward side*

The minister of Christ is called to stand fully, in living understanding touch with the people, all the people, God commits to his care. This, if accepted and acted on, is the necessary safeguard against "professional" priests and ministers. To be completely natural, at home, as much in worship in Church as out in the garden or in the bazaar is the mark of genuineness of Christ's ministers.

We ordained men find this very difficult. Unconsciously but so dangerously we pose and play the priest; we use religious words to impress people, we think we exalt the spiritual by pretending to despise the material. The rural minister can and very often does this as much

as his urban fellow-minister. When we destroy the natural in the supposed interests of the supernatural we fail to realise that thereby we deny the Incarnation and make nonsense of the whole sacramental basis of the Christian Faith.

The head of my theological college, B. K. Cunningham, once put it this way: "The larger way (which was the way of the Incarnate Life) is that whereby the padre, being himself in fellowship with God and moving in and out among his people, allows something of God's life to pass through him to them."[4]

This standing in the world, being fully human, really men and not "professional" makes great demands on us as ministers. It means that we need a simplicity of character, a readiness to admit gladly our ignorance about countless matters in life, a humility with our neighbour, which makes us happy to learn from him rather than teach him, which things can only come from God if and when we are empty enough of ourselves to receive them. It is a matter of enlarging "our capacity for receiving"[5] and this in so many aspects of our life, receiving from God, receiving from the most illiterate and perhaps dirty village man, receiving from the uneducated and tiresomely slow servant we may have in our home. Our being of use to our Lord as His ministers is conditional on our being men who are capable of receiving not simply from God Himself, from theological professors and learned tomes, but from the simplest person and experience that comes our way. To stand on the manward side is in fact a matter involving the way of the Cross, which is also the way of joy.

In a letter from prison written on July 21st, 1944, Dietrich Bonhoeffer put it this way: "It is only by living in this world that one learns to believe. One must abandon every attempt to make something of oneself, whether it be a saint, a converted sinner, a churchman (the priestly type, so-called !), a righteous man or an unrighteous one, a sick man or a healthy one. This is what I mean by worldliness—taking life in one's stride, with all its duties and problems, its successes and failures, its experience and helplessness. It is in such a life that we throw ourselves utterly in the arms of God and participate in his sufferings in the world and watch with Christ in Gethsemane. That is faith, that is *metanoia*, and that is what makes a man and a Christian."[6]

When we begin to stand *with* our neighbours rather than over against or above them we will begin to see things, life, as they do. We will notice that they see in terms of pictures and feelings and very little in terms of ideas or concepts. A new idea will thrill our minds while for them a vivid story will convey far more meaning. I may feel little need for movement and colour and action in my worship—and this will be especially true if I am a so-called unemotional Britisher—but

my village neighbours will love worship to be colourful; they will instinctively need to express their love for God in lovely colours, in song, in movement, even in dance.

How little distance we village ministers have gone in this! Education, including theological education, has made us disdainful of such earthy behaviour; we have been so busy guarding the Catholic Faith that we haven't allowed it to catch fire; we have imagined that a villager has in some way to be organized, he has got to be able to read, he has got to behave in Church roughly like a so-called civilised western Christian before he can be introduced to the depth and joy of Christian experience. The work of Hans-Reudi Weber among the illiterate people of Indonesia[7] is one of the very few examples of how to take village friends as they are and know that the revelation of God's love for them as shown in the Bible can be shared by them now. They do not need to be in some way altered before they can enter the world of the Bible nor is education a prerequisite for acceptance of the Gospel.

Our twin lack in this matter is, I believe, caring sufficiently to stand with, to feel with village people, *and* courage. We more frequently these days are concerned with the indigenisation of worship but I wonder whether this can happen until "we move in and out among our people" in a closer obedience to the Incarnate Lord than we do at present, and until, when something new is being born, the leaders of the Church can trust the Holy Spirit to guard the purity of the Faith.

As must have become apparent Nairne's two aspects of the ministry, "in respect to men to stand on the Godward side and in respect to God to stand on the manward side" are interlocked; no man has one without the other. We know that Christ the Lord is fully man and fully God, the one never to be separated from the other, and the servant of the Lord must needs reflect both the divinity and the manhood—*or neither*. In our *thinking* we may distinguish two, while in fact there is one, the minister of Christ who before God stands with men and who before men stands with God.

In conclusion, may I share with you my very tentative thinking on how those of us who are called to train ministers may help those who are called to be ministers to rural people. I put these dreams and wonderments before you knowing fully well that you know so much better than I what is involved in theological education. My only excuse is that, from afar, this remains my concern also.

I ask three questions:

(A) Should not the training of rural ministers (may be of all ministers?) be centred on the Common Life of staff and students together?

This question springs directly from what I have said above for it is relationships we need to teach and learn, the relationship of prayer and communion with the Blessed Trinity and the relationship between man and man, that standing alongside, feeling with the other man, in loving understanding touch with the people God commits to our care.

I question greatly whether these things can be taught—or caught—unless the staff members live among the students. This intimacy and sense of brotherhood will inevitably be costly as is pointed out vividly in the biography of the Principal of a certain theological college in the west. Of him this is written: "It meant that the Professor should scarcely ever be out of the House, that he should have no private life, that he should take the men into his confidence on all but the most private affairs, that he should be available for the most solemn or the most frivolous talks at any hour of the day or night, that he should have all his meals in hall and use the same bathrooms as the men. This was the price he paid for the 'Common Life'. But it was the making of Westcott House."[8]

Under these conditions future ministers "catch things" and sense attitudes, as much material as spiritual, which cannot be caught from the most wise and brilliant lectures. It may be objected that in this I am excluding teachers who are married. I do not believe this is so, although I agree that the cost to them will certainly be heavy—and, I add, the resultant joy will be great. Those who think that men can be trained in a process which has hours 9 to 12 and 1–30 to 4 or possibly 6 exclude themselves from the cost and this joy. Their students work under a heavy handicap.

(B) My second question set against a background of such a common life is this: Is not the simple life the way best suited if the formation of men is to be such as I have tried to describe above?

When I ask this I am aware of the dangers which arise here in our country because of the false idealism, the too easy piety ascribed to the simple; perhaps I know the dangers more particularly because I happen to belong to a group which is convinced of Christ's demand for simplicity. I covet most for myself and for others the gift of inner simplicity, the gift of plain, straightforward action and speech and this, I am inclined to think, is linked with an external simplicity which involves doing together so far as possible our own work no matter how menial people's opinion may hold such work to be and eating as cheaply as possible remembering our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit.

My own view, for what it is worth, is that in the setting of this country where simplicity, poverty, renunciation, are known to be manifestations of true religion—an outlook which Christ our Lord rather deepen than contradict—the setting for the training of ministers can only ignore these at a cost. We so cussedly refuse to accept this fact and the results of our refusal are often apparent for all to see.

(C) My last question is this: Are the Church theological colleges and schools being entirely fair to future rural ministers as men whose first and primary calling it is to stand on the Godward side?

It is surely possible for every theological student to leave his college much better equipped in terms of Christian theology and Bible knowledge than he was on entering the college; perhaps the intellectual disciplines are not all you would wish for but they are given great and necessary emphasis. Can the same be said about the training of men whose life is to be a life of prayer, a life lived in the joy of standing before God with and for his people, a life in which meditation and contemplation are a real and growing point in his whole offering to God? I am not asking necessarily here for more lectures, nor for extra hours in Chapel—that would be altogether too exterior an approach to a matter which is essentially interior—but I am suggesting that almost to a man we ministers of Christ are tragically weak at this point at which the world needs us to be strongest. It is our fault, we who are already ordained, for we say with our lips that the life we live hidden in Christ is all-important when quite obviously we do not believe what we say. It is also the fault—if you will allow me to say so—of the theological college which taught us that the external, the intellectual, are in reality far more important than the life of prayer and silence.

These questions point the way of my own thinking. They ask whether the time is not coming when the churches of India will not consider the training of her ministers in what one might call a Christian "Sevagram". This would mean a common life of worship, prayer and hard work, intellectual and manual, in which men and women would learn by the day-to-day experiences of living together with one another and with God the joys and sorrows of their calling to be ministers of Christ. It does not worry me over much that such a way would demand much from staff and students for is it not true to the history of Christ's Church that every renewal depends upon the glad offering of a price? For long enough we have lived, we have taught others to live, by "cheap grace". The hope of renewal lies in God's once more confronting us with the costliness of His gifts for, after all, our calling is to be ministers of the Crucified.

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THE GOSPEL AND VILLAGE RELIGION

By The Rev. E. O. Shaw

In a sense it is very shameful for us all that we should be meeting here considering what the Gospel—the Good News—is for our village folk. It is true that the Gospel must be spoken in the tongue they understand, brought home in symbols and actions that are meaningful to them. It must be translated into their idiom, into living terms for them, just as much as it must be translated into their familiar colloquial speech.

A German missionary who served in a very remote part of Abyssinia relates how for many, many months, even after he had lived in the country and acquired the language, he was still able to make no progress in getting a real Gospel message across to the people. It was only after he had been taken into a hut, seated on a mat and fed by hand by one of the women, thus making him one of the community, that he began to learn the words that were intimate and sacred. And only then could he begin to speak of sacred things in a way that they understood.

We have to learn that intimate, powerful language that moves men's hearts.

Yet it is shameful—is it not?—that we should meet to consider this subject, shameful that leaders in a Theological College should have to have a special meeting for it. For, you see, our Message is that God is love, and that He puts that Love into our hearts. If we really had that Love, that genuine love, we who have been in the field for years and years, we would not need to meet and discuss. We would *know.*

Love not only 'believeth all things', love understands and speaks out of that understanding. "To the Jews I became as a Jew in order to win Jews.... to those outside the law I became as one outside the law that I might win those outside the law", says Paul. "To the Villager I became as a Villager that...."—but we can't say that. Here in our meeting we commemorate the fact that we have *not loved*, that we have patronised and pushed or pulled from outside, that we have dominated or fascinated or drawn by the magnet of material or social gains, but we have not loved, or we would know, and understand and sympathise, and feel their hunger and frustration, hope and fear, and sinful frailty. We would know them, and they would know we knew.

And so perhaps it is not only somewhat shameful that this should be our topic, but somewhat silly or senseless, arrogant or absurd that I, very much the outsider, baffled often by language and customs, strung up and tied down to all sorts of urban work, official and administrative tasks, should dare to open my mouth on this subject at all. I can only plead that I did not make the choice, and that what I say is said in great humility. Like you I am a co-seeker, who seeks to know these people and has begun to love them and is fumbling for the things to say.

It is one of the wonderful things about love that sometimes even a fumbling word can be as meaningful as the most well-turned sentence and the deepest thought. Pray God that some of our fumbling be thus blessed.

If love means anything, it means the effort to understand. Though it may start as fumbling it cannot be content to remain that. The fumbling must be like the feeling hands of a blind man which, sensitive to each impression, convey little by little, but at last completely, the outline and shape, and texture, and at last the reality which they feel.

From our meetings here it has quite clearly emerged that our knowledge is by no means complete. It is perhaps no wonder,—Hinduism is such a vast phenomenon—but it is regrettable that our knowledge during the last generation has dwindled and not increased as it should. The Church has turned in upon itself and been concerned with its own problems. They were certainly large enough—the real Christianising of recent converts, the struggle for true independence and self-control, the integration of mission activities and institutions and all their administration under the Church, the increase of caste rivalries and tensions within the Church, and with the very growth in numbers the tendency seemingly inevitable in this land—but by no means only in this land—to become a community self-concerned and self-sufficing, if not self-satisfied, occupied in running its own activities for its own people. And as such it is comfortably encapsuled or insulated from the world, forgetting that Christ's law of dying to self in order to live and bear fruit applies to Church as well as individual, forgetting that the encapsuled skin must dissolve away if the medicine is to work, or forgetting, if you like, that the insulation must be stripped away before the vitalising current can pass.

The Church must be Salt and Leaven and Light. But how? What message has it for Village India? We must say here that there is no simple and easy answer to that question. There is no one answer to the question 'What is the religion of the village people?'

In the villages you will find the almost endless variety of Hinduism itself. Even the religious system of the great devas and their temple

worship is no one thing. It is a patchwork of theism and philosophic monism, of ancestor worship and sympathetic magic, of crude animism and refined theistic *bhakti*. In the villages you will find all these and more. The Brahmin is there, perhaps a Vedantin, but his womenfolk each Friday make their offerings and go round the sacred pipal-tree where the nagas, snake-stones, are, and he himself is meticulous in his regard for the planetary influences. A farmer takes his regular part in the Kali worship, and pays his contribution for the *grāma devatā*, but his family god is really Murugan in the hill-temple 15 miles away, and for his own choice he has more faith in the yearly pilgrimage to distant Tirupati. Another farmer's son and his wife are back from Madras where they have no particular religious observance beyond a bow to the Pillaiyarkoil at the nearby crossroad. But now they have come home for it is the big festival at the Kannikoil ten miles away, and there they go to offer some white flour and a black cock, and to see or even perhaps to join the group swept up into a trance like ecstasy who come marching up from the river bed and then amidst the shouting and the shrieking of the terrified children go striding across the red-hot glowing fire-pit.

And into all this medley of faiths and fears, into all the tangle of men's minds which clutch at the spiritual power which seems most helpful, or draw near fascinated to that which seems most dangerous and to be dreaded, loosing their hold and clutching at another if it seems more vital, and the old has failed to bring about what was hoped for. Into all this kaleidoscope of changing patterns of faith come the new ideas, the scepticism of the Dravida Kazhagam with their mocking laughter, and the powerful appeal of the Communist to hunger and envy, to the ever present resentment of injustice and oppression. Into it comes the cinema with its fascinating glimpses of a world which must surely be fairyland, yet they seem real people, a world which charms and moves men and women alike and which works powerfully in their hearts. Into this comes also Christian schools and hospitals, and Christian people, so often thinking themselves superior and wanting to interfere in other peoples' lives.

What have we to say? What is our Gospel? I want to think less of the sophisticated and the highly advanced, the Vedantin whose philosophic armour can turn aside each weapon, or the convinced theistic *bhakta* who looks to the grace of Śiva and for the day when he shall reach his feet, or knows the loving glance of Perumal.

I want to think more of the less educated and the less sophisticated in their attachment to the mother spirit of the village or the many other spirits that crowd around. The man who tries many things, the deity

in the great temple but also the Mariammal in the village, and the dancing spirit-procession of the worship of the local goddess. I am thinking of him. I am thinking too of the new winds of thought and sentiment blowing through the land, thinking too that many have already heard something of Christ. He whom we speak of is no longer quite a stranger. His face and character are already taking shape dimly before men's eyes. What can we say for Him and about Him?

Here are some of the themes which we can present:

1. First among them is the theme of Christ crucified. This fascinates and awes those who see pictures of the crucifixion or have it vividly portrayed before them. It speaks to something deep in their hearts. Why did it happen? Because it sets them thinking in that way it can form the starting place for many penetrating approaches. Here is what man's selfishness, pride and fear really does. Here is the mystery of a sacrificial death freely accepted. Here is Goodness throwing itself away for the sake of the unworthy.

2. Naturally this can lead on to a second theme. The necessity of Christ's Death to break the power of sin and the opportunity given to us to be set free from the power of sin by being united to Christ who conquered it. He became sin that we might become righteousness of God in him. This theme of being united to Christ, and so belonging to him and having his life in us, seems to be a very fruitful one to be followed up. Christ breaks the power of *karma* by taking man's sin on himself and offering men his life.

3. Yet next we must present Christ in a more challenging form. He is one who will not be content with a superficial honouring. Christ is one who claims sole allegiance. His power is only for those who accept his Lordship and the Way he shows is not just one way which men can follow if they like, or pass by if they prefer some other way. He claims to be THE WAY. He states that no man can serve two masters. Here undoubtedly is a stumbling-block, but nothing must be done to try and remove it from the way. It is here that we come sharply against one of the fundamental divergencies between Hinduism and Christianity. A true Śaivite of the theistic type looks to Śiva as his Lord who saves by grace, but in actual fact he probably worships at many shrines, including those of other gods, and is content to let other men go their own way. He himself can change if he wearies. Ultimately man remains as the one who chooses which way he will go. Christ demands more. He demands surrender. He claims to be the one Lord. In our preaching we must make this claim clear, for only too easily our Hindu brothers will be prepared to honour Jesus as one *avatar*, one

embodiment of divine grace and power whose favour men may get by worship without the need of the self-surrender which is real faith.

4. For the villager often entangled in fear of evil spirits, of the evil eye, and malevolent magic, another powerful way of presenting Christ is as the one who saves men from the power of demons and who can completely protect His own against all the hidden forces of evil. Fear of these remains a potent force in the life of the ordinary villager especially in times of sickness or trouble, and it is good news indeed to be offered the protecting power of one who drove out evil spirits and still lives to protect those who put their trust in him.

5. Going on from this one can present the truth made sure to us in Christ's Death and Resurrection that nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus. He reaches out both to the worst sinner and to the victim most deeply caught in the toils of evil forces. Neither the impersonal grip of some evil fate nor the unlucky stars, nor even death itself can separate us from that love.

6. All this goes to make up the Good News of God, the King and Ruler of His own Creation who is concerned even for the least of his children. This Gospel that God is King, and that we can enter and enjoy the peace and freedom of His Kingdom—the same Gospel that Jesus brought—is Good News still. It is the news that God is not infinitely remote, unknown, indifferent or impassive, and so having to be approached by devas or devatas or other spiritual beings, but is Himself living, powerful, near and lovingly concerned with each separate person. The same arguments that Jesus used of the loveliness of the world, its unity, order and mighty power can still be used by us while the growing mass of scientific knowledge and growing ability to discard old superstitious notions should help us to show that it is only our ignorance that causes our fears and only a lack of faith that makes men believe that other minor spirits are more powerful. Trust God for He reigneth and He is Powerful, Righteous and Loving.

7. Indeed this thought of the Mystery of God's purposes now being made known to us is one peculiarly suited for today when electric power lines stride across the country-side, radios are found in every village, the health services now making available inoculations stronger than the goddesses whose anger was feared before, and medicines which can work cures before thought quite impossible. And all these things have come from our growing knowledge of the world in which we find ourselves. What before seemed to be chaotic and meaningless, or bewilderingly sinister in its sudden apparent hostility to man, is now beginning to be seen from another angle. People are ready to learn that behind it all there is wisdom and purpose, and Christ's message of

God's wise love and purpose for me has a chance of being listened to as never before.

8. Similarly there are many forces at work in the life of India which make easier the presentation of Christ as Him who has come to break down the barriers between man and man and so fulfil God's purpose of a Kingdom in which there is brotherhood. The Government's actions in opposing caste divisions, the work of social uplift, the new opportunities of education for all, the new place given to women, the increasing contacts with peoples of other races, all these find a meaning in Christ.

9. The changed national situation too opens the way for another topic, challenging and important. Previously government was in foreign hands. It was an external thing, almost it might be thought a matter of fate. The evils in it and the corruptions in local government were seen almost as inevitable natural circumstances. But now government has become the people's own responsibility. They have chosen the representatives. Politicians woo the electorate and make their promises. Yet with the government in their own hands people find that corruption and other evils are more common than before. Independence is not enough. So there is a new understanding of the need for righteousness and a new relevance and interest in a righteous Saviour who calls men to righteousness.

Many more things might be said. To men who believe in spirits coming upon them there is an obvious message in the promise of a Holy Spirit who can purify, teach and give living power to men. There is also a message in the loveliness of Jesus Christ who calls men to follow Him and learn of Him. Here is the *guru* who is Himself pure and also loving and who appeals both by His teaching and life to India. Now as never before the people of the villages are interested in Him, in His message and the life He calls men to.

VILLAGE RELIGION IN TAMILNAD

By The Rev. Henry Lazarus

Religious beliefs and practices vary from one district to another to a considerable extent, but still there are certain features which are common to all the villages in Tamilnad. In my efforts to gather first-hand information from the villagers, I was surprised to find that although the devotees were eager to take me round, when it came to explaining about the deities and the religious observances connected with them, they were very vague. Their descriptions were mixed up with much rationalisation at every place. The modern villager believes himself to be wiser than his forefathers and tries to explain away most of the observances followed for years.

In order to gather information about basic beliefs and practices in village religion, one must approach the subject from three points of view. Firstly, one must take into account the information he can get about the temples and shrines that are found in villages. Secondly, he must gather all the facts about the religious beliefs and practices prevailing in family life. Lastly, one must find out the influence of some of the reform movements and political parties through which there has been a good deal of change in village life.

Going round some of the Tamil villages one can easily notice that there are fairly good-sized temples and little shrines in different places. The majority of these temples have some connection with Hindu forms of worship, and in most of the shrines we find rough stones representing some of the Dravidian gods. Among the temples, there are buildings for Subrahmanyar, Vigneswaran and Mariamman in almost all the villages I have visited.

Most of the temples in villages are connected with the Saivite and Vaishnavite temples in South India. Worship and celebrations are carried on in these temples just as they are done in the bigger temples with which they are connected. Even in the little shrines erected in the name of Vinayagar, Perumal and Subrahmanyar located in the Adi Dravida section of the village, they try to relate themselves to the religious observances in Tirupathi, Kancheepuram and Mylam. One can easily notice from the forms of worship adopted and festivals observed, that the so-called outcaste tries to identify himself with the high caste Hindus. Deepavali, Pongal, Adi Kirthigai, Maha Sivaratri and most of the other festivals are observed by the outcastes as well. They observe these festivals more with a view to feel one with the rest than out of any religious conviction. Whenever there is illness in the family or when they require some special favour they make vows, and promise that if such and such favour was granted and such and such mishap averted, they would offer such and such offering to the god at Tirupathi or Kancheepuram. In this connection, offerings related to vows made to gods in these pilgrim centres are made at the shrines in their own village representing these big temples.

In the shrines we find stones representing Mariamman, three stones representing Gangamma, one stone representing Pilliar, one stone for Perumal. Invariably, one finds two or three sisters with Mariamman and a male attendant to guard them. The sisters are called Chellie, Valli and Poonjalai. The other shrines commonly found in most of the villages are shrines for Iyyanar with images of horses, the shrine for Ellai Pidari (guardian of the boundary), Droupadiamman Koil and Bhajana Koil, with an image of any one of the village deities. Most of these shrines are deserted and very little attention is paid to them. In some temples lamps are regularly kept burning. During the time of certain festivals and special days these temples become centres of attraction for large crowds.

The Valluvars act as priests for these shrines. During these festivals blood sacrifices are not so profusely offered as it was done some ten years back. But offerings consisting of rice, gruel, cocoanut and other eatables are brought, which either go to the officiating priest or to feed the poor. These offerings are brought either as thank offerings for or blessings received in the past or with a view to receiving favours during the coming year. Though animal sacrifice is disappearing in most of the places, even now, in a place called Kunnathur in South Arcot, animal sacrifice is offered and the entrails of the animal are carried round the village by one of the devotees taking hold of them in his mouth. He is supposed to be possessed by the deity. Within the radius of ten miles this is the only place where such a thing happens.

The fact that the villagers still maintain these shrines and keep the worship alive proves that they still live in a world filled with spirits, some of them favourable and some antagonistic which should be placated in order that he may live peacefully. In a place called Mylam the chief feature of the annual festival is exorcism. Crowds gather round little groups of exorcists who try to drive out the devil. It is mainly young girls with some kind of mental upset that are the victims of this ceremony. Many of the villagers remember the legends of the seven sisters and trace back the origin of these deities to some illegal relationship which a Brahmin had with a low caste girl and thus connect their religious belief with the Hindu gods. They maintain that these deities are daughters of Parvathi.

Some years back Mariamman was considered to be the goddess of small pox, Kali the goddess of cholera and Gangamma the goddess of fertility of soil. Now I find that Mariamman seems to take up the functions of all the three. They still believe that Ellaipidari guards the village from the entry of evil spirits into the village and that Iyyanar guards the village at nights, riding the dummy horses erected near the shrine.

That village people still live in a world filled with spirits is made clear, when we look at some of the religious beliefs, practices and superstitions in their home life. They erect the Muhurta Kal invoking the deity of the corner when they erect the wedding pandal. Harati is poured in front of the bride and bridegroom right after the wedding to ward off the effect of evil eye. Whenever there is a death, they light candles and keep them to keep away the spirit of the departed one.

They throw used broom stick, broken winnow and burnt out stick on the way as the dead body is taken to the cemetery because they believe that these articles are repulsive to the spirits and so would prevent the spirit of the departed one from returning. They also scatter rice and other grain all the way through and believe that this would keep the spirit of the departed one busy picking up the grain till day dawns and keep it away from returning home. When the funeral procession comes near the boundary stone they keep the dead body for a while and narrate the story of Harischandra. Something is said about the evil and good deeds and they declare that he would go to *moksha* if his deeds were good or *naraka* if his deeds were evil. They carry rice and milk to feed the dead one, on the third day. On the sixteenth day many are fed believing that the spirits of all the departed ones will be pleased and that the last one, who is supposed to be hovering round the house till the sixteenth day, is expected to join the rest of the spirits, no more to return to the house.

From the above observations one can see that there are two types or forms of worship in villages, one purely Dravidian and the other Dravidian form mixed up with Aryan forms. There is some truth in a statement such as: "The Parayas have been little affected by the Brahminical doctrine and customs, though with respect to ceremonies they have not escaped their influence. They are normally Saivites but in reality they are demon-worshippers."[1] Of late the tendency to shift over to the side of worshipping the Hindu pantheon is increasing. Gandhiji's campaign against caste system, the opening of temple doors to the outcaste, the use of the term Harijan (children of God), the granting of special educational facilities, concessions and special seats in the Assemblies make the Harijan feel that he is one with the rest of the Hindus. Had it not been for the still persisting strong caste feelings throughout the country he would have been absorbed into the Hindu fold.

While dealing with the basic beliefs and practices in village religion one cannot overlook the great influence of Dravida Kazhagam. This group started as a reform movement with political ends in view. They had strong arguments in support of establishing that the so-called outcastes and the rest of the non-Brahmins were an independent class by themselves with a much better social position before the invasion of the Aryan religious influence in the South. Thurston, in his *Castes and Tribes of Southern India*, brings out this point. He bases his argument on Valluvars and their functions and the great poet Tiruvalluvar. He says "Valluvars were priests to the Pallava kings before the introduction of Brahmins and even for some time after it" (Vol. VI, p. 81). About Tiruvalluvar he says, "It is safe to say that the extraordinary sage, would not have attained the fame he did or have received the honours that were bestowed upon him had not the Valluvars and therefore the Parayas been in the circle of respectable society in his day." With arguments such as these Periyar E. V. Ramasamy Naiker, leader of D.K.M., started his campaign against the Brahmin priests. He helped the outcaste to a sense of self-respect and to assert his rights in the land

[1] Thurston, *Castes and Tribes of Southern India*, Vol. VI, p. 103 f.

for which he had better claim than the Brahmin intruder. In connection with this he introduced self-respect marriages, encouraged breaking of idols, the *Tirukural* was given wide publicity and regarded as the Book of the outcaste. All this did create a hatred for anything connected with Brahmins, but it did not give sufficient impetus to revive Dravidian cults. In the meanwhile, this reform group got itself mixed up with near-atheist teaching, condemning any kind of belief in God or any other spirit beings. As a result we find that most of our villagers are losing their religious beliefs. This is true of many a Tamil Harijan youth. They have developed a hatred for what is considered to be Brahminic, and they know very little about their own cults. This is one of the reasons why we find most of the shrines and temples in Tamil villages uncared for. At the same time people are beginning to see that the Kazhagam movements as political parties have not fulfilled their promises and have not been successful in achieving their social goals. Congress workers take advantage of this situation and try to revive Hindu religious beliefs. Therefore one also finds that some of these deserted shrines and temples being revived. Hindu festivals both in some villages and towns are becoming more and more popular, but mostly as occasions for trade and recreation.

The fact that many young people do not know where they stand and are eager for something to hold on to is a challenge to the Church. In spite of the damage caused by the atheistic movements, our people have not given up their natural tendency to be religious. As we pass through the villages we are reminded of St. Paul's words at Athens "Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship I found also an altar with this inscription 'to an unknown god'. What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you." With the current political campaigns and widespread social awakening in Tamil villages, the altars for the "unknown god" are increasing. This is a time at which the Church has a glorious opportunity to offer the Gospel of Jesus Christ saying 'What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you'.

GANGAMMA PŪJA AT ŚRĪ MUDUGĀNAKUNTE

By The Rev. R. J. Sleigh

This pūja is centred on the south side of Mudugānakunte tank, which is between Kurubarahalli and Kengenhalli, two hamlets of Gangasandra Panchayat, and about three miles North-East of Gauribidnur (Kolar District). The tank is a fairly large and attractive one, and on its south side, a little above the bund, there is a grove of large banyan trees. Underneath these there are a number of stone sheds, usually deserted and in varying states of disrepair. There is also a small roughly-built white-washed Vaishnavite shrine surrounded by a half-built enclosure.* In front of the shrine are two pairs of wheels for a god-cart, and two sets of snake-stones on the usual platforms (*aswathakatte*) with the usual neem and peepul trees flanking them. A cart-track passes through between the sheds and the trees down to the water's edge (when there is water there). A little further away there is an open well with steps, and another modern-type well, and some oleander bushes whose flowers may be used for pūja. It is a delightful, quiet spot, deserted for six days of the week.

It is said that many generations ago before the tank was built on this site, one of the elders of the Kurubas of Kurubarahalli (still a great centre for sheep and goats) was grazing his flocks on this spot (and dozing in the mid-day heat we may surmise), when he saw a fair maiden. This maiden who was really Gangamma transported him in a moment to the Ganges, whence he brought back, again in a moment of time, some of the sacred water. He built a small pool on that spot to contain the water, so that people could come to obtain the favours of the goddess. This pool was called Śrī Mudugānakunte, and still remains in the bed of the tank, and is said to contain water throughout the year. When the tank is full, the whole of the water acquires the virtue inherent in the small kunte, so it is only necessary to bathe in the water at the edge of the tank.

Regarding the small shrine, which is in the name of Śrī Venkataramanaswamy, there is no comparable interesting myth. It is simply said that one of the Gangasandra leaders had a dream telling him to build it. On another occasion one man presented the 2 pairs of stone wheels mentioned above, but another had a most vivid dream to the effect that there should never be a car-festival for this particular temple —and indeed there never is.

The Gangamma pūja itself now takes place each Monday, the height of activities probably being at about 11 a.m. The choice of day could not be explained. On that day people come from far and near; somewhere in the region of 120 women bathed on the Monday in mid-

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* The idol in the shrine is a rough stone wet with ghee and covered Vaishnavite hands—as other parts of the building too.

October when the writer was there (it was said to be a normal crowd); but apart from them there were all the other accompaniments of a small-scale fair—people with rented stall-space selling materials for worship, food, pots and pans, etc., barbers cutting the hair of young children whose parents could not afford the trip to Tirupati, Government officers, jutka drivers, numerous onlookers and innumerable relatives. It was an incredible transformation of this usually quiet spot.

The object of the Gangamma pūja is to obtain a child. In order to do this it is necessary to do the pūja on three successive Mondays (a considerable task for those who come from Mysore and other distant places). Although the pūja was started by the Kurubas, Okkaligas and others also extensively practise it nowadays. The first part of the pūja is to bathe in the tank. While doing this, the woman must search in the bed of the tank and find five small stones (there are many conveniently to be found). These are washed and then placed on the ground quite near the edge of the water. in a group of three and a group of two; these are the foundation of the worship, which is performed by the woman herself, still in her wet sari. On all the stones red kunkuma powder is placed in dabs. Between the two sets of stones three betel leaves are arranged, and on this is placed a mixture of jaggery and ground rice, some betel-nut, and one small black ring. A second ring of this type is hung upon one of the stones in the group of three; along with this is a small dried piece of sacred leaf (I believe of the Ichala tree) and a small garland (at that time of chrysanthemums), and stuck in the ground nearby are some lighted incense sticks. Behind the group of three stones are placed a new sari and choli, unworn. Before this curious collection of oddments a coconut is broken by the woman in the usual manner. After this pūja is finished, if it is the third and final visit the woman then changes into the new sari and the old one is laid out on the ground to dry. Meanwhile the relatives have been preparing a meal either in one of the old sheds or in some other convenient place; this meal also seems to be an essential part of the ritual. After that is finished, all go to do pūja at the Sri Venkataramanaswamy shrine. Here the priest at present is Thimmappayya, a Brahmin from Gangasandra, and pūja follows a conventional pattern; very often the worshippers walk three times round the shrine, and then offer flowers, coconut, money, and sometimes also camphor, kunkuma, etc., and plantains. The priest waves a flame and breaks the coconut in the normal way, and the rows of beggars outside hope they will also be beneficiaries.

That is the extent of the writer's observations and enquiries. It seems fairly obvious that both the Gangamma pūja in this particular place and the Venkataramanaswamy pūja here are of relatively recent origin, though it may not be possible to trace it. Moreover, we here seem to have an Aryan type of worship imposed upon a Dravidian type. The Gangamma pūja is said by Elmore (*Dravidian Gods in Modern Hinduism*, Ch. X) to be distinctively Dravidian in character, and to be practised by the Gollas (the Telugu counterparts of the Kannada Kurubas) with whom this pūja is especially associated; the Brahmin priest, who gave me the myth, was quite explicit about that. Further enquiries in the Kuruba hamlet of Mikelahalli, some 10 miles away

confirmed that Śrī Mudugānakunte was their religious centre, which they all made certain to visit at least once a year. Perhaps it would, have been profitable to ask whether they did any other pūja than that, designed to produce children. Be that as it may, the observed pūja was carried on without any pūjāri and without any institution of any sort. While the five stones may have some relation to those worshipped in the Panchayatana ceremony (as described in Monier William's *Religious Thought and Life of the Hindus* as quoted in *Hindu Religion, Customs and Manners* by P. Thomas, p. 33) in which they represent the five great gods Vishnu, Shiva, Ganesha, Śakti and the Sun, certainly my informants had no idea of their significance. The elements in the worship itself also bear but a vague and distant resemblance to the traditional sixteen stages in pūja in classical Hinduism. All these go to suggest that this pūja really has Dravidian origins and its practices have simply borrowed some features of classical Hindu practice in a mumbo-jambo way without understanding them.

There is nothing unusual, however, in the Venkataramanaswamy pūja to suggest that it is fundamentally different from that at any other small Vaishnavite shrine in this part of Mysore State. The Brahmin priest is there, and the usual somewhat truncated and corrupted form of pūja is offered. In any case this is obviously regarded as subsidiary to the main Gangamma pūja, and the justification for the obligation to worship here also is not understood. One would suggest that this is of later origin than the Gangamma pūja; seeing this regular religious practice going on without any priestly ministration or shrine the protagonists of Brahminical religion had this small shrine erected to make that ministration and its benefits available. If that is really so, then it was just another episode in the long history of the Brahminical attempt to get a monopoly of religious leadership—or at least to get a good profit from it at every point. Indeed, this event, although happening only recently, might be considered as typifying the whole impact of Aryan Brahminical religion on Dravidian South India; always the attempt to superimpose the Aryan gods upon the Dravidian, with the insistence that they were superior; and because of the superiority complex and more vigorous culture of the protagonists of Aryan religion the claim was conceded by the Dravidians. Yet the old ideas lived on in those groups less profoundly affected by the new culture sufficiently to reappear here and there from time to time, as in this Gangamma worship. So, then, we suggest that this Venkataramanaswamy Temple and worship was later added on by the local priestly group; and while they most probably would not have admitted it at the time because of their rationalisation of their own motives, this was done as a good investment, so that they could accrue their own percentage of the profits. And because of the complete religious confusion in the minds of the worshippers, they were not able to see through this move, so that now this is seen as a necessary though subsidiary part of the whole pūja—and incidentally the only one in which they offer money and in which they do not receive back all that is offered. The present Brahmin priest is a mild and obviously sincere man, and would probably be most upset about the suggestions the writer has made. So would we be if the same assertions were made about the Christian Ministry; and yet they would be true of certain places and times.

There we may perhaps leave the worship of Venkataramanaswamy. But we should go into the details of Gangamma pūja a little further. Of course, this is not the only form of Gangamma pūja common in the neighbourhood; at any stream crossing, particularly after a storm, there may be seen the remains of incense sticks and kunkuma powder on a heap of sand where the worship has been carried on; usually the same may be found at some place on the shore of every sizeable tank, and the Kurubas at Mikelahalli said they perform their regular pūja on the bank of a small streamlet near their village (which still had water in it in February) only visiting Śrī Mudugānakunte occasionally. This seems to be a generalised sort of worship, following local customs. The pūja with which we are concerned, however, is a specialised one which has developed through the years. It is also exclusively performed by women, which perhaps explains some of its irrationalities. In everyday worship the women seem to be generally most faithful and most conservative; but they cannot be expected to be able to discriminate very much. After all, the men's world and the women's world are pretty well separate; and it is in the men's world that there is contact between castes; that some can read, that sometimes some of the scriptures may be known and a little religious philosophy understood; the women continue very much by rule of thumb, so it need not surprise us that a form of worship which they have developed should appear a curious hotch-potch if religiously and historically considered.

The actual materials for this worship seem to be a curious mixture of the essential and the accidental. The five stones seem to be basic, and in some way to represent the presence of Gangamma. The new sari and choli seem to have importance for this pūja with the specific object in mind. Flowers, incense sticks, kunkuma powder and rice and jaggery preparations are very usual objects for offering in pūja, and have perhaps become associated with this worship for that reason. Betel leaf and nut may also come in that category. And of course the breaking of a coconut is a very usual part of pūja. Rather more unusual elements are the piece of dried sacred leaf and the two black rings. The latter are rather too big for the fingers but much smaller than bangles; they are said to have a religious significance—the reader may know what it is! But at least the latter two are not universal accompaniments of pūja and may have some special significance. Of the sixteen elements of classical pūjā dīpa is certainly absent, and circumambulation may be also, while many of the others are confused. There is namaskara, but no invocation or mantra. Altogether the elements seem to have been gathered together indiscriminately though perhaps largely suggested by other forms of pūja. But now the pattern is stylised and every woman does exactly the same. Other parts of the whole pūja might have been added on in various ways—the sacred bath is general in Hinduism and widespread in other religions; the meal on the spot perhaps arose through necessity in this isolated place and only later came to be accepted as a part of the ritual itself.

The various materials and actions of pūja are seen in classical Hinduism in the light of the requirements of the gods worshipped—*e.g.*, offering of seat of the god to sit down, water to wash his feet, food to eat, etc.,—almost the same kind of treatment which would be offered to an honoured guest visiting the house. One would suspect that this

idea was not largely present in the minds of these Gangamma worshippers. In this case, the worship is not simply one to honour the deity for her own worth or for past blessings but with the definite object of changing her mind or at least persuading her to act, by giving a child to the worshipper. In order to do this, it will be considered essential to carry out the pūja in the required manner, exactly; probably the goddess is not much thought of in personal terms at all. The whole pūja is therefore mantric in character; by doing particular acts the god may be persuaded or even forced to act in the required way. It is easy enough to condemn this as superstition—but do not a good many Christians view Intercession in this way? Or at least petition—for this is a question of obtaining something for oneself? The main difference is that Christians say things and these Hindu women do prescribed things—but it costs the latter much more effort!

There is one other viewpoint from which the materials of worship may perhaps be examined profitably; that is, what function do they perform in daily life? The essentials of daily life at least of a vegetarian are there—rice and water. It is perhaps curious that ragi is never offered anywhere as far as I know—even in a ragi-eating land the superiority of rice is acknowledged by making it the symbol of daily bread. Then there are betel leaf and nut, symbolising the pleasure of taste; flowers and incense sticks the pleasures obtained through the sense of smell. In this case, singing and light are omitted. The necessity and pleasure of clothing is acknowledged in the new sari and choli. The coconut is more an instrument of pūja than an offering of a symbol; with the possibility of breaking it, pouring out the juice, and returning the consecrated flesh to the worshipper, is it not perhaps the nearest the ahimsa practiser can get to animal sacrifice? Generally speaking, while Christians have acknowledged the position of money in present-day life and offer it as a symbol of the offering of the whole of their life, they too often forget about the rest of life, on the other hand these Hindus offer things representing all departments of life, but very often forget the importance money now plays in their lives. It is right and good that we should feel in our Liturgy in the Offertory that we are offering with the bread and the wine and the money the whole of our everyday life; but would it not be even better if we could offer other things as well whose symbolism would be much clearer to the village Christian?

That completes the discussion of this matter, which clearly merits further investigation and thought. It may be added that although Thurston and Elmore both clearly say Gangamma pūja is characteristic of the Gollas, the details of the legends and of the pūja which they describe have very little in common with these observations.

It is perhaps not right to complete this essay without reference to the most recent purana that has arisen concerning this matter. My predecessor, the Rev. F. Gurney, came to Chickballapur after some years' service in Anantapur. It is said that he and his wife camped under the grove of trees at this place, and afterwards their only son was born after 13 years of married life. It is not, however, suggested that Mrs. Gurney did the prescribed pūja, so it seems we should not admit this as evidence for the effectiveness of the rite!

REPORT OF THE INSTITUTE ON VILLAGE RELIGION IN SOUTH INDIA

***Bangalore, Jan.* 23-27, 1961**

In January this year the C.I.S.R.S. organized in Bangalore a Seminar on Village Religion in South India. For five full days experienced rural workers, both ministerial and lay, gave serious thought to the challenges and opportunities which today confront the Christian evangelist in the changing scene of village life in South India. In group and plenary session much time was devoted in the Seminar to a discussion of the main issues involved. The discussion was based upon a questionnaire which had been prepared for the purpose by a group of leaders. The questionnaire is appended in this Bulletin, as also a list of the participants in the Seminar.

The Seminar did not attempt to answer all the questions, nor could it deal fully with any one of them. Nevertheless certain observations emerged as a result of group thinking, based on personal experience of living and working among village folk, of people involved in the task of Christian witness. The material in this report is based on the findings which were formulated in separate groups and later revised in the light of plenary discussion. Several have assisted in the process of putting together the group reports, although the final draft as revised in the following pages had to be left to one.

The purpose of the Seminar was to initiate a more thorough study of what we have here called "Village Religion" than has been done hitherto. In sharing our concern with a wider group our intention is to encourage such investigation in this neglected field of contemporary religious life in India, which is at the same time the most challenging area of Christian witness.

Grāma Devatā Worship in South India

Village folk themselves, whether caste or outcaste people, do not have any very clear notion of the difference between *grāma devatā* and *Hindu devas*. But as a rule the worship of Hindu deities is conducted in temples, which are usually elaborate edifices. These temples may be either Vaishnavite or Śaivite, though often we find that even this distinction is not clearly drawn. Śaivite temples, however, invariably have a *linga*, and sometimes also a *nandi*. Inside these temples there are shrines for various gods and goddesses, images of whom are kept in the sanctuary. Offerings are made to them by the Brahmin priest, usually in the evenings, and they consist of flowers, fruits and camphor. These are brought by individuals and families.

The *grāma devatā* shrines, on the other hand, are much more modest buildings. Sometimes they are very crude structures, more often of a few stones put together by the way side, perhaps under a tree. There are no images in these shrines. The *devatās* are usuall represented by

stone slabs which may be smeared with paint. Those who officiate in these shrines are mostly non-Brahmins. In some parts of the country they are even outcastes. This is particularly so on occasions when animal sacrifices are offered. Although the practice of making animal sacrifice on a large scale is diminishing, there still continue to be held periodical worship-festivals in which the entire village participates. Such worship is offered by the entire community, including caste and outcaste folk, at times of draught or severe epidemic.

While there are current mythological stories about the Hindu *devas* which are based on the *Purānas*, there are few such legends about the *grāma devatās*. The Hindu *devas* are held to be more or less distinct personalities. They are in some way related either to Vishnu or Śiva, and each one of them is believed to possess specific traits which give every Hindu *deva* a certain individuality. On the other hand, in the case of the *grāma devatās* they are frequently grouped together, "the seven sisters", for instance. They are all referred to as *ammai* (mother-goddesses), although the *sapta kannigas*, the seven sisters, are said to be as unmarried. No distinctive characteristics are attributed to the *grāma devatās* so as to give them any individuality. In general, they are quick tempered, very temperamental and easily provoked. But they differ from one another primarily in function. Each *devatā* is associated with a disease, and a particular locality. Every village claims to have its own *devatās*. Boundaries are set, as it were, to their sphere of influence; and the area is marked by boundary stones (*ellai kal*) which are regarded as significant landmarks only up to which the village worship invariably extends.

Village religion is more concerned with offering sacrifices to placate *grāma devatās* rather than with the worship of the Hindu *devas*, and the primary motive would seem to be fear of these *devatās*. Anything that happens of the nature of a calamity to an individual, a family or the village at large, is attributed to the displeasure of the *grāma devatās*. It is also believed that the *grāma devatā's* favour and protection should be secured for the success of any business undertaking or domestic arrangement. So village worship consists in making vows at the shrines of the *devatās*, the devotee promising to offer the sacrifice of an animal in return for a particular gift such as that of a longed-for child, deliverance from a misfortune, healing from a disease, or the success of any particular trade venture. Both caste and outcaste Hindu villagers (and also some who are not Hindus) make these vows and fulfil them. The underlying belief is that some of these mundane things of life are easier secured with the aid of these *devatās* rather than by invoking the help of the high gods of traditional Hinduism.

Village religion is thus based very largely upon the belief in the *śakti* (power) for good and evil attributed to the *grāma devatā*. *Śakti* may also reside in the spirits of the departed, especially of those who had met with untimely or violent death. The ministrants at the worship of *śaktis* are a special class of *mantravādis* (magicians). These are said to have special knowledge of magical spells whereby they can summon to themselves powerful spirits to do what they are asked to do, either by way of good or harm. Such belief in magic and spells has a very big place in village religion. Many hold that with the help

of these *mantravādis* evil can be averted and good secured for the individual and the family. *Śakti* worship is periodic, in times of special need.

The belief is also current that there are auspicious times and seasons. People usually consult local, professional astrologers for the right time to perform domestic ceremonies such as marriage, naming, etc., for it is believed that if anything is undertaken or done at the wrong time it will result in disaster to the individual and the family.

It must be also pointed out that all Hindu villagers do believe in an Almighty God, the Supreme Being. Such a *Bhagavān* is however regarded as far too removed and detached from world-life, that he is not in any way involved or concerned in what happens in the here and now. It would not be true to say that in worshipping the *grāma devatās* village people are in fact worshipping this Supreme Being. Because there is no doubt in their minds that the particular offering to the particular *devatā* is very definitely connected with the particular object of securing a particular end. It may be however that in the case of the worship of the Hindu *devas* there is a vague idea back of at least some of the minds of the village folk that the Object worshipped is God in some form. But this would not be true of other objects of village worship, though the name *svāmi* is applied to all objects of worship, and the word *pūja* is used to indicate all such worship.

Village religion as such is not concerned with enforcing any moral standards of right individual or social conduct. More important are ceremonial observances which relate to such occasions as child-birth, puberty, marriage, funeral as well as the daily round of bathing, shaving, nail-paring, etc. Domestic occurrences connected with the cycle of life are occasions of religious rites at which Brahmin priests are called to say Vedic *mantras*, which are enjoined in the *Manu Dharma Śāstra* as *samskāras*.

The traditional ideas of right and wrong are conditioned by village opinion, and usually disputes are settled by a group of elders constituting a *panchāyat* for each caste and sub-caste community. But of recent times the authority of the elders is weakening. Community life in the village as a whole is becoming less pronounced. This, of course, is due to the spread of individualism so characteristic of modern life.

But, in general, the individual ethic of the villager may be said to be influenced by two concepts, *puṇya* and *pāpa*, both of which are, however, not too clearly defined. The word *puṇya* is usually understood to mean the good done *now* whether by way of charitable giving, religious observances, or kindly deeds of neighbourliness, all of which may be productive of benefit to the doer in *after* life. This does not necessarily mean *another* life, for in village religion life after death is also connected with the idea of a *svarga* or heaven. Similarly any neglect of giving to charity, of performing religious rites, or of neighbourly action is regarded as *pāpa*. In the villager's religious vocabulary these two terms, are not only correlates but also opposites. In this realm of moral ideas of right and wrong, of good and evil, the distinction between village religion in the narrower sense and " popular Hinduism " breaks down.

Whether the traditional Hindu doctrines of *karma samsāra* and *môksha* are held by caste and outcaste village folk it is again difficult to say. Not all of them would claim that the present life is but one of a chain of lives. It is true that we sometimes hear village folk refer to their *karma*, but that is more in the sense of an inevitable fate rather than in the sense of something which has happened in consequence of an event in a previous birth. Undoubtedly there is an attitude of helplessness with one's present lot, especially among the outcaste folks. But there is no attempt to explain the present in terms of a past nor is there any effort so to live in the present that better things be obtained in a future life. Therefore the conception of *môksha* is not so much one of deliverance from *karma samsāra* as of some future state of existence in which one will be delivered from all the evils of present life, a state of happiness which is associated with the home of the gods and a better world, a heavenly abode (*svarga*).

Thus village religion is itself a complex. How much of it can be regarded as part of Hindu *sanātana dharma* it is difficult to say. More so because the animistic forms of village religion are changing, as more and more of accepted Hindu ideas and practices penetrate into village religious life and practice. For one thing, animal sacrifices are certainly decreasing, and may disappear altogether. For another, there is less occasion for community worship of *grāma devatās*, since other and modern, effective measures are being taken to relieve the village from the distress caused by lack of rains and the spread of epidemic diseases. Just exactly what the future holds in store we cannot forecast, but there is reason to think that, with the spread of community development and the revolutionary social change so true of modern India, a great many of the beliefs associated with village religion will also be eventually changed in the decades to come. But the belief in *mantras*, in auspicious times and seasons, and the practice of domestic rites and rituals is so strong that it will continue to hold a very significant place for many years to come in the village life of Hindu India. In fact, it may be said that this magical aspect of religion will persist in all religion till the end of time.

Impact of Modern Life on the Village

The greatest force for change in village life within the last twenty years is modern machinery. Electrification has made available electrical energy for pumping water, flour mills and lighting, at comparatively cheap price. Transport through frequent bus service has drawn village communities closer together, and it has also brought the city nearer to them. Modern methods of agriculture have not yet been adopted widely. But there have been noticeable improvements in agricultural implements and consequent increase of yield. The use of chemical fertilizers is becoming more common.

The outreach and impact of industry and mechanization is reflected in almost every aspect of the life of the village. It is seen in the shift from the traditional occupations associated with caste origin. Quite a large number of village youth who have found employment in industrial labour never return to their traditional occupations. Their children are also brought up to take up other work for a living. Never-

theless, the hold of tradition is still there in village society, in that though they may abandon their traditional occupation their social status in the village is still conditioned by it. Education and wealth do not make any radical change in social status. On the other hand, the social cleavage between the caste folk and the outcaste folk seems to be growing wider. The caste folk resent the claims of the outcaste to social and religious equality. On their part, the outcaste people are becoming aggressive and militant, so much so that in some places there have been violent clashes.

Formerly the outcaste villager was a serf, and he believed that it was his fate to serve the landlord or the head of the village or a particular class of society. Now that labour has become scarce, there is competition for his labour. He can bargain for his wages. The villager, his wife and children can migrate to neighbouring towns in search of work during the lean months of the year, when there is no work in the village. They earn money there and bring it into the village. Unlike in the past money is now flowing into the village. The introduction of monetary economy has meant that the villager does not think of income in terms of farm produce and consumer goods, but puts a money value on everything.

At the same time, it is noticeable that the former cohesiveness of village community which was marked by characteristic interdependence of caste groups is no longer to be found. There is now considerable individualism. The joint family has also been visibly affected. Enterprising young men and women take the initiative to break away from the accepted pattern of village community life. Frequently employment in neighbouring industrial centres, and consequent economic independence from the family, have resulted in young people setting up separate homes, without reference to the larger joint family obligations.

Since Independence, the disappearance of the former princely States, the reorganization of the Indian States, and the introduction of new patterns of local government have, again, revolutionized the villager's thinking. He now has a new sense of 'belonging' to a vast community called the nation, though he has no clear notion of what that involves. The villager is aware that the State is interested in improving the social and economic conditions of the people. Schools are being established, and in some places free education given to children. His previous belief that he was condemned to a life of ignorance and that education was the birth right of only selected groups of people has given way to new hope.

Great river projects are being undertaken. Canals are being dug, tanks are repaired, water reservoirs are built, irrigation and food production are increasing. Community Development Centres and National Extension Blocks are being established. Reorganisation of villages, *Gram Panchayats* (Village Governing Councils) and *Zillah Parishads* are afoot. The people are invited to take a share in the government and in the management of their own affairs. Formerly, the villager's interest was centred round his own village. Now, his horizon is widening and his interest embraces the District of which his village is a part.

The health schemes and community development plans of the State are making steady progress. Their influence is at present confined to limited areas. This has to be so because these projects of the welfare State have to be initiated at select centres. Nevertheless their influence is spreading. It is a matter of time. By and large village people are willing to get the help of nearby hospitals and dispensaries in times of illness. They now realize the fatal menace of epidemics though they may not quite understand the cause. Faith in inoculation for prevention of small-pox and cholera is very real today in village life.

Family planning is not so well known yet. But in villages in the neighbourhood of the larger cities prevention of birth is an accepted idea. To what extent the contraceptives which are now put on the market are used wisely and rightly it is difficult to say. But there is no doubt that migration to industrial areas is largely responsible for their popularity. And it is in this connection that the influence of the radio and the movie should also be taken into account. These have contributed more to social education than the plans for basic education and literacy put into force by local government and voluntary agencies.

Effect on Rural Christianity

The extent of the influence of what we have called village religion on the Christian congregations living in a rural setting depends upon several factors. Primarily it is determined by how far removed they are from their ancestral religious background. In general, first generation converts hold to village religious beliefs and practices more closely than those of the second and third generation. But even here we cannot generalize. Sometimes it happens that the first generation of converts are more faithful in getting away from their background than their children or grand children. A great deal also depends upon the careful attention given to the Christian nurture of converts and upon the watchful care of evangelists in preventing converts from still adhering to pagan ideas and practices. Again, much depends also upon the spread of education, contact with urban life and communication with fellow Christians elsewhere, especially with those living in close-by urban centres, and, above all, on adequate pastoral care. Finally, where converts have been secured in mass movement areas from single outcaste blocks, there is a marked tendency to carry over former pagan customs and religious notions. And these practices take a long time to loosen hold.

While it must be admitted that the situation differs from area to area in South India, it must be also admitted that one noticeable feature to which serious attention must be given by the Church is the very real fact of what may be described as imperfect Christianization. This is largely due to serious miscalculation on the part of missionary evangelists that village folk can be expected to *grow* in faith without continued attention to their spiritual development. Also, we tend to underestimate the tremendous influence of the environment. Pressure of public opinion, fear of social ostracism, and persisting dread of displeasing village deities and spirits, are factors which condition the thinking and living of village Christians, especially of those who have come out of outcaste groups.

It would not be true to say, however, that village Christians *openly* participate in the community sacrifices of the *grāma devatās*, or even in other calendar and local agricultural festivals. There is that much local Christian opinion. Village congregations would take serious notice of such infidelity, whether by individuals or groups. In fact, village evangelists are frequently requested to help local Christians by appealing to local village authorities in order to protect them from being pressed into service at times of village sacrifices to fulfil such professional tasks as drum-beating, etc., which tradition had assigned to their caste. By and large it may be claimed that there is not much *overt* identification of village Christians with village religious ceremonies and observances. But it is in their personal religion that there is a reversion to pagan ideas and practices. It is not uncommon for village Christians at times of a domestic calamity or when seriously ill to make vows like other village people to *grāma devatās* or other objects of village worship. A common practice is to consult local astrologers for auspicious times and days. It is also usual for many village Christians to seek protection from the evil eye or other spirits by using "charms" obtained from village *mantravādis*. There are also many stories current about village Christians also engaging the services of *mantravādis* to defend themselves against "adversaries" who are supposed to have cast similar spells against them, and which need to be counteracted.

But the greatest evidence of the continuing impact of the environment on the life of the village Christian seems to be in the observance of what are generally known as life-cycle rites. They are sometimes totally taken over from their pagan background and at other times modified by certain Christian additions. In particular these rites are observed at times of conception, child birth, naming ceremony, attaining puberty (in the case of girls), betrothal and marriage, death and burial, and last but not least, observance of after-death commemoration, obviously to help the spirits of the departed dead and to keep them away from interfering with the affairs of their living relatives.

On most of these occasions, it is customary to invite non-Christian relatives as well. It must not be forgotten that the community life of village converts is very strong. Not only do they live among their non-Christian friends and relatives, but the continuing tie is maintained by marriage alliances which are contracted not infrequently by Christian converts with their non-Christian relatives. Here again one should be very careful of generalization. Because as a rule inter-religious marriages, even among village Christians, are severly discouraged if not totally forbidden. What frequently happens, however, is that marriages are arranged by village Christians with their Hindu relatives on the understanding that the Hindu partner will be baptized. More often than not very little preparation for baptism is given in these cases, and practically no attention is paid to the after nurture in the faith of such newly baptized people. In this way there is a continued inflow of traditional village religious notions and practices into the life and conduct of village Christian congregations. The Church does not seem to be aware that while on the one hand it may be gaining ground on the other hand it is also loosing ground by this very process of baptism.

It may not be out of place here to suggest that some careful study be undertaken by the Church on this whole question of the religious beliefs and practices of village Christians. Special attention may be drawn to five primary concerns.

(1) *The need for a teaching ministry.*—Christian workers in villages have neither the training nor the adequate knowledge themselves of the fundamentals of Christian truth which should be the subject-matter of patient and persistent instruction. Of course, there is the major difficulty created by the fact that village Christians are for the most part illiterate. To be able to *read* the Bible for themselves is one thing, but to *know* what the Bible has to tell them in their situation today is quite another thing. Village catechists seem more concerned about making people read and write, which may be a very good thing in itself, but which is not the end of Christian nurture. Again, words used in our various Indian languages for Christian ideas have to be necessarily the same words used in village religion. The most common term such as *Yesu Svāmi* used for the Lord Jesus has a dangerous possibility of being misunderstood to mean one other, but perhaps the more powerful, of all other *Svāmis* of village faith. The very word "powerful" is again misleading, because "power" (*śakti*) is always associated in the village mind with specific functions, and such power is invariably invoked (by spell rather than by prayer) for the *personal* benefit of men and women. Such instances can be multiplied, but the point here is that there is desperate need for a *Manual of Instruction for Village Christians* which is really of the nature of an elementary text-book on Christian theology based on the Bible and applied with challenging relevance to the specific circumstances conditioning the present life of village Christians.

(2) *The importance of pastoral care.*—Little thought seems to be given to personal counselling. When faced by problems of conduct, because he has no one to go to for guidance, the village Christian falls back naturally on traditional custom as expressed by the social opinion of his group. Many of the persisting practices related to what is known as the life-cycle are carried over because at such times of "crises" he does not find that Christianity as a religion provides resources of supernatural assistance. For instance, the Church seems to take so little interest in the whole miracle of birth, or of the mysterious possibility that a girl at a certain age becomes capable of bringing a new life into being, or again of the continued existence of the departed and of the possibility of their continued interest in those they have left behind. What is happening is that the village Christian observes on the sly as it were the traditional rites associated with these "events" as "additionals", although they may be officially unrecognized or even prohibited by the Church. Perhaps the worst offenders in this matter are the village catechists themselves.

(3) *The lack of specific rules for personal and social conduct.*—It is true that the Christian faith does not give priority to "works". We believe that we are saved by grace. But at the same time we believe that there are standards of Christian life in the here and now that have to be maintained. The Church has the responsibility of giving the simpler folk within its fellowship very clear indication of what is right

and what is wrong from the Christian point of view in personal and social relations. The village Christian cannot be expected by himself to draw out for himself rules of conduct from Christian principles of goodness. Consequently there arises the need for specific codes which will help the village Christian to know just what to do and what not to do in a situation that calls for moral decision.

(4) *The significance of Christian worship.*—It is always a difficult task to bring home to the simple mind of the villager the corporate nature of personal devotion and congregational worship. The distinctiveness of the Christian faith in God consists in emphasizing at the same time the individual relationship between God and man on the one hand, and the corporate relation of God with man through man on the other. The Hindu tradition of the individualistic nature of worship, which also persists in its collective expression, is still characteristic of village Christianity. Our emphasis on organization, giving, and order in the worship forms generally prevailing in rural congregations often neglects to foster spontaneity, simplicity, and natural expression. A great deal more needs to be done especially in the matter of language, music, and perhaps dance. Of course, no generalization can be made, but there is need for more courageous experiments. We must also not forget that Christian worship can be one of the most effective means of communication of the Gospel and of Christian witness. Therefore, efforts should be made to throw open all acts of Christian worship in village congregations to non-Christian people as well. This would particularly apply to acts of Christian worship associated with christening, marriage, and funeral. There may be differences of opinion with regard to the use of liturgy and ritual, but there is agreement on the need for simple, meaningful forms of worship which may be common to Christians in a particular area. Imaginative use may be made of colourful symbols and natural self-expression.

(5) *Adaptation of traditional practices and customs.*—Much is being said and written about indigenization today. What we do not seem to reckon with is that unless Christianity takes root in the soil, there is the danger of the new faith of the convert as a Christian developing side by side a parallel traditional structure of accepted customs carried over from the old religious background. This in fact is so in the case of many village Christian communities. It is not so much that Christian beliefs and practices have been Hinduized, as it were, but that they have continued to be held, unrelated and unreconciled, alongside of Hindu beliefs and practices. What is more, in the case of many village Christians, in times of crises the old traditional beliefs assert themselves as more relevant. That accounts, for instance, for many village Christians observing auspicious times, the life-cycle rites, making vows at the shrines of *grāma devatās* at times of illness or misfortune. What this indicates is that traditional culture and accepted institutions which have crucial relation to life's everyday demands need to be vitally related to the Christian faith. Serious thinking has to be done as to how best the relevance of the Christian faith can be so expressed that it comes to have meaning and value in relation to everyday life. The tendency to isolate ourselves from the prevailing culture of our people obviously defeats its very purpose. Moreover it should not be forgotten that the

cultural values themselves are all subject to much change. And it is imperative that Christians also should become more fully involved in this whole process of cultural reintegration. So that the eventual outcome of the change, resulting in new values and institutions, will have embodied in them elements of the Christian faith.

Village Religion and Resurgent Hinduism

Undoubtedly one of the effects of political independence is a new self-consciousness in the religious life of village India. But this may not be described as a widespread "revival" of religion. However, there is an increasing tendency to include some form of religious rites at times of local public functions. of visits of government officials, and, such community celebrations as the village school prize-giving, etc. These religious rites are however of the kind which are followed in popular Hinduism where local Hindu deities are invoked rather than of rites connected with village religion.

At the same time it seems to be true that many village shrines have been renovated. They are visited more regularly by individual votaries. Animal sacrifices are discouraged, and in many areas prohibited by state action. Nevertheless private worship by individuals and families at these shrines continue to be held and the fowls offered and cooked are eaten by the family in the neighbourhood of the shrine. There would appear to be a steady "Hinduization" of village religion, in that the form of worship at the shrines and worship in the village temple is growingly alike. In part this may be due to the abolition of social disabilities of the outcaste, although the removal of untouchability as such has not so far led to any revolutionary consequences in religious views about the caste, and not all village temples are thrown open to outcastes.

In many South Indian villages, especially in the Tamilnad, the influence of the Dravida Kazhagam has been a very real force in the last two decades. Its anti-religious propaganda cannot, however, be said to have much effect on the common folk. Nevertheless among youth, factory workers, and the literate villager the movement has aroused a great deal of unfriendliness towards the Brahmin caste. In some places it has resulted in people in whole villages dispensing with the service of Brahmin priests at times of religious domestic observances. In some villages, again, the Kazhagam movement has successfully introduced its "reformed marriage rite". But the influence of the Kazhagam (and of Communism) is restricted to villages which are situated in the neighbourhood of factory towns.

In some areas Hindu workers connected with the Arya Samaj, the Ramakrishna Mission Svāmis and Sarvodaya volunteers have made greater impact. This is accounted for partly by the political influence of the Congress. It is reported that Congress leaders, with a view to securing party strength in local and State government have given encouragement to some of these workers. While it may be true that these Hindu religious volunteers undoubtedly do a great deal for the social uplift of village life, by establishing schools, dispensaries and community development projects, they also make it a point to drive

home the fact that the religion of the village is Hinduism. This they do not so much by any organized scheme of educating people in the fundamentals of Hinduism as by drawing attention to the alien nature of other religious beliefs. It is pointedly affirmed that people in villages are apt to get more out of government if they remained as Hindus. In some places it is true that Arya Samaj workers, for instance, carry on a counter-propaganda against Christian work among village folk. There have been instances of blacksliding, but by no means are they widespread.

The attitude of the villagers themselves in regard to religion, and to Christian work in particular, varies from place to place. It would not be true to say that there is any persecution of Christians in villages. But there is certainly no longer the same friendliness towards Christian work. In part this is due to the unfriendliness of village leaders who have been influenced by political considerations. Obviously the fact that power resides in government with those who professedly claim to be Hindus is largely responsible for this.

How much of what we have called village religious beliefs and practices educated Hindus accept it would be difficult to assess. But it may be pointed out that village religion is not by any means confined to rural areas. In all the larger towns and cities of South India also it is common to find such way-side shrines almost everywhere. These are different from the temples. Mostly these shrines are found at the cross-ways of the city roads. Undoubtedly these areas were originally centres of village communities. Of late there has been a tendency to renovate these way-side shrines. This is done usually by the labouring class of city dwellers. Worshippers at these shrines are also largely drawn from this group. But at times of festivals, of even national calendar festivals, it is not uncommon to find Brahmin and high caste non-Brahmin Hindus also participating in worship at these shrines. Animal sacrifices are rarely offered, although it is not uncommon to find families eating food after it has been offered to the *devatā*. Some of the ministrants at these shrines in city areas are poor Brahmins who still make their livelihood in this way. They are also in demand for saying the prescribed vedic *mantras* at domestic rites.

There seems to be a revival of the worship of *devatās* at these shrines and of the practice of observing the domestic rites more faithfully in recent times, both in rural and urban areas. In part this is due to the influence of the preaching mission of some of the Hindu religious leaders like Sri Śankaracharya of Kanchipuram. There cannot be said to be any conscious effort to reclaim village religion into the larger whole of what now is called the *sanātana dharma*. But it seems true that there is no longer any such distinction, as was drawn by educated Hindus of a previous generation, between what they call "higher Hinduism" and "lower Hinduism".

The fact of the matter would seem to be that this form of religion, as pointed out earlier, which consists in placating mother goddesses, appealing to *śaktis* for assistance in times of crises, observances of auspicious days, times and seasons, consulting astrologers and professional sooth-sayers and the more specific magical practices associated with

Śūnya and *māntrikam*, has always been a very significant aspect not only of Hinduism but of all the historical religions. As in the case of other religions so in that of Hinduism also no serious study of magical rites and forms of worship has ever been undertaken by Hindu scholars. Much less has any effort been made to relate what is the magical in relation to that which is of the core of religious faith.

Although a great deal of the Christian enterprise has been concerned with village religion it must be confessed that very little serious study of it has been done by Christian evangelists. The fact that there has been considerable success in making conversions from people who are adherents of this form of religion in South India has probably never raised the question as to *what kind of faith* to which we proclaim the Gospel. It is needful that we should secure more and more data about the beliefs and practices of village Religion. But one needs to go deeper than that to try to discover the kind of faith-response on the part of man that is responsible for all the characteristic forms of religious behaviour which is associated with *grāma devatā* worship. One wonders whether there is any real difference in the faith-response of the village Christian after all, even after his being admitted into the Christian church, although there may be noticeable differences in *the expressions of that faith* in form and content.

The methods so far followed in commending the Christian Gospel to village folk have been preaching, teaching, social work and economic betterment. Recently audio-visual aids have also been more widely used. Experience seems to indicate that the more effective means is personal contact. With government agencies already at work, there is need for a careful revision of our methods of approach and a clearer understanding of our objectives in evangelism. Greater attention needs to be paid to the development of a body of consecrated leaders from among the people themselves who would be more and more responsible for the local congregation rather than a paid worker appointed by a Church body. More should be done to provide adequate training for these village lay leaders. For this purpose there is need for a specialized Christian ministry which will think in terms of the needs and demands of rural Christians and will possess the adequate resources of faith, social understanding, and technical knowledge.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Topic I: The Nature of Village Hinduism

1. What ideas do villagers have about the deities they worship? How do they differentiate *grāma devatās* from the Hindu *devas*?

2. How prevalent is *śakti pūja*?

3. What are the characteristic forms of the worship of *grāma devatās*? How does this differ from the worship of the Hindu *devas* with respect to priesthood, places of worship, occasions of worship, and nature of offerings?

4. Exactly why do villagers say that they "worship"

   (*a*) *grāma devatās*,

   (*b*) Hindu *devas*, and

   (*c*) other objects?

5. What role is played in village religion by *māntrikam*, *śūnyam*, etc. (magic and spell)? Is this a meeting ground between village religion and Hinduism?

6. What ideas traditionally accepted in Hinduism, such as *karma samsāra* and *môksha*, are held by

   (*a*) village caste folk, and

   (*b*) village outcaste folk?

7. What are the villagers' accepted moral standards and how are they linked to their religion? How are the ideas of *dharma* and *pāpam* linked to their sense of what is "auspicious" and what is "ritually impure"?

8. Is there a valid distinction between the village religion and the sectarian Hinduism of rural India?

Topic II: Forces of Change in Village Religion Today

1. List the changes you have found in the last twenty years in the social, economic and cultural life of both caste and outcaste people living in villages. What are these changes due to?

2. Indicate in particular in what ways the joint family, caste, and the social structure in village life have been affected by modern forces.

3. What have been the resultant consequences of such efforts of the welfare State as public health schemes, family planning, etc., especially in village religion?

4. What are the effects in village economy of the spread of industry, mechanisation, and the shift from traditional occupations?

5. What is the relation between the changing social pattern and present-day village religion?

6. Are there any indications that the spread of education and literacy, contact with urban culture, the radio and the movie, etc., have brought about change in the beliefs and practices of village religion?

7. Is there any evidence of a cultural revival of village art, music, dance, etc.?

8. Is there a central unchanging element in Indian village life which can be called characteristically Indian?

Topic III: The Influence of Village Religion on Village Christianity

1. To what extent do village Christians participate in
   (*a*) all-India calendar festivals,
   (*b*) local agricultural festivals,
   (*c*) community sacrifices to the *grāma devatās* in times of difficulty, and
   (*d*) worship of special caste or family deities?
2. What practices do village Christians use to protect themselves against demonic spirits, the evil eye, or black magic?
3. Do village Christians resort to black magic?
4. Are village Christians given names associated with Hindu deities, and if so, what religious significance do these names have?
5. Do Christians intermarry with non-Christians? What form of marriage ceremony do they have? Do they share Hindu notions about the significance of marriage?
6. What influence do the following Hindu ideas have on them?
   (*a*) God as transcendent,
   (*b*) God as *avatāra*,
   (*c*) Divine grace,
   (*d*) human merit,
   (*e*) worship of the *ishtadevatā* and tolerance of the religious rites of others, and
   (*f*) the concept of religious community?

   Are new caste converts bringing in new influences of these kinds?
7. Is the moral conduct of Christians influenced by the standards and practices of village Hindus:
   (*a*) Hindus of the same caste background as these Christians?
   (*b*) Hindus of higher castes than these Christians?
8. What elements of Village Hinduism have been incorporated in Christian worship—and not simply practised alongside Christian worship?

Topic IV: Present-day Resurgence of Hinduism and Village Religion

1. To what extent is there a 'revival' of religion in village India? What concrete evidence is there of such revival?
2. What Hindu groups work in villages to awaken the religious consciousness of village folk, and what Hindu groups carry on propaganda against religion? What are the primary motives of these bodies?

3. In particular, what type of activity do
   (*a*) Arya Samajists,
   (*b*) Ramakrishna Missionaries,
   (*c*) Sarvodaya workers,
   (*d*) Dravida Kazhagamites, and
   (*e*) Communists
   undertake in villages in your area? Are there any others?
4. Has there been any change in the attitude of villagers themselves towards
   (*a*) religion,
   (*b*) the *sanātana dharma*, and
   (*c*) Christian work among them?
5. What proportion of educated and high caste Hindus participate in village religious rites? Why do they do so?
6. Are Hindu festivals like Holi, Dipavali, etc., observed by the village folk? How and why are they observed? Is this a new development?
7. Is there any noticeable tendency to reclaim and absorb village religious rites by Hindus?
8. Are there any booklets by Hindus on village religion and magical practices in local Indian languages that you know of?

Topic V: The Gospel and Village Religion

1. What methods of preaching the Gospel in our villages have been found most useful in your area?
2. What kind of religious reading material should be provided for village evangelism? What are the literature now available?
3. What emphases in religious beliefs and practices do Hindu missioners place in their preaching to the village folk?
4. What are the main objections that Hindus have to our evangelistic work among village folk and how do we meet them?
5. In what ways should we co-operate with Government and Hindu agencies in rural work? Is there any 'rivalry' among Christian missions in village work?
6. What aspect of the Gospel should we emphasise in village evangelism?
7. What use do we make of
   (*a*) the Bible,
   (*b*) Christian worship, and
   (*c*) the sacraments
   in village evangelism?
8. What special equipment should village evangelists possess and how do we provide for their training?

PROGRAMME

Monday morning, 23rd January 1961

9–15 to 9–45 .. *Orientation.* P. D. Devanandan.

9–45 to 10–45 .. *Basic Beliefs and Practice of Village Religion.* H. Lazarus, B. Prabhudas and K. G. S. Dorairaj.

11–00 to 12–00 .. *Nature of Village Religion.* John B. Carman.

NOTE ON THE AFTERNOON PROGRAMME

In the afternoon, during what we call " workshop sessions " from 2–30 to 4–30, we shall divide ourselves into groups of from six to ten members. Each group will take up for discussion the questionnaire prepared for the topic of the day, which will be introduced by brief papers. The Chairman and the Secretaries will present a ten-minute report of the group's work at the Conference hour session each night at 8–00 P.M. The reports will be followed by discussion with a view to planning for follow-up studies.

Tuesday morning, 24th January 1961

9–45 to 10–45 .. *Forces of Change in Village Religion Today.* J. J. Wesley, S. Vethanayagam and P. M. Easow.

11–00 to 12–00 .. *Forces of Change in Village Religion Today.* P. D. Devanandan.

Wednesday morning, 25th January 1961

9–45 to 10–45 .. *The Influence of Village Religion on Village Christianity.* P. Y. Luke, G. Gnanamuthu and M. C. Samuel.

11–00 to 12–00 .. *The Influence of Village Religion on Village Christianity.* S. Devapragasam.

Thursday morning, 26th January 1961

6–45 .. Flag Hoisting on the College Green on Republic Day.

9–45 to 10–45 .. *Village Religion and the* Sanātana Dharma. Prof. M. Yamunacharya.

11–00 to 12–00 .. *The Influence of Village Religion on Village Christianity.* S. Devapragasam.

Friday morning, 27th January 1961

9–45 to 10–45 .. *The Gospel and Village Religion.* E. O. Shaw.

11–00 to 12–00 .. *The Gospel and Village Religion.* E. O. Shaw.

Daily Schedule

7–00 to 7–45 A.M.	Morning worship	12–30 P.M.	Lunch
		2–30 to 4–30 P.M.	Workshops
8–00 A.M.	Breakfast	4–30 P.M.	Tea
9–45 to 10–45 A.M.	Lecture	7–00 P.M.	Dinner
11–00 A.M. to 12–00	Lecture	8–00 P.M.	Conference
12–15 P.M.	Intercessions	9–30 P.M.	Evening prayer

All meetings will be held at the United Theological College, 17, Miller Road, Bangalore–1. Arrangements for your accommodation and hospitality are being made at the United Theological College.

P. D. Devanandan, *Director.* S. J. Samartha, *Dean.* John B. Carman, *Bursar.*

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

1. Miss Grace V. Aaron, Church of South India, Erode.
2. The Rev. J. B. Carman, C.I.S.R.S., 19, Miller Road, Bangalore–1.
3. The Rev. Dupaty Charles, A. B. Mission, Vinukonda, Guntur District.
4. The Rev. G. Devabhushanam, Church of South India, Jammalamadagu.
5. Dr. P. D. Devanandan, Director, C.I.S.R.S., Bangalore–1.
6. The Rev. S. Devapragasam, Church of South India, Tirumangalam.
7. The Rev. K. G. S. Dorairaj, Church of South India, Mulanur, Coimbatore District.
8. The Rev. P. M. Easow, Church of South India, Kumplampoika, Pathanamthitta, Kerala.
9. The Rev. G. Gnanamuthu, St. Thomas Church, Pettai Street, Kumbakonam, Tanjore District.
10. The Rev. A. Jeevaratnam, Church of South India, Perambur, Madras.
11. The Rev. K. M. John, Church of South India, Alleppey, Kerala.
12. The Rev. Henry Lazarus, Church of South India, Muttathur, Ananthapuram, South Arcot District.
13. The Rev. P. Y. Luke, Church of South India, Medak, A.P.
14. The Rev. J. Nathaniel, Health Camp Residence, Gudalur, Nilgiris.
15. The Rev. P. Charles Paul, Church of South India, Marikuppam.

16. The Rev. B. Prabhudas, Church of South India, Panigiri P.O., *via* Jangaon.

17. The Rev. R. S. Raleigh, Church of South India, Challakere, Chitradurga District, Mysore.

18. The Rev. Dr. S. J. Samartha, United Theological College, Bangalore.

19. The Rev. P. Samuel, Church of South India, Tiruttani, Chingleput District.

20. The Rev. Marikili Samuel, Church of South India, Medak, A.P.

21. The Rev. M. C. Samuel, C.N. Bible School, Tholaserry, Thiruvella, Kerala.

22. The Rev. E. O. Shaw, Church of Scotland Mission, Chingleput.

23. The Rev. B. D. Vijayarao, Church of South India, Vilasagaram P.O., *via* Vemulavada, Karimnagar District, A.P.

24. The Rev. S. Vethanayagam, Church of South India, Manaparai, Trichi District.

25. The Rev. J. J. Wesley, Church of South India, Secunderabad, A.P.

26. The Rev. W. Yesupatham, Church of South India, Ranipet, North Arcot District.

BOOK REVIEWS

Traditional Cultures in South-East Asia. Edited by Nilakanta Sastri. (Published by UNESCO, Orient, Longmans, Bombay), 1958.

During the years 1955–56 a series of University Seminars and field studies were conducted in South-East Asia under the general direction of UNESCO. The Seminars were held in Madras, Karachi, Andhra, Lahore, Peridiniya and the University of Rajputana. Field studies were carried on in various places by carefully chosen experts. Subsequently the papers read at the Seminars and the reports prepared by the directors of the field studies were collected, a significant selection was made from them, and that selection was prepared for publication. This volume is the result.

The Seminars and the field studies dealt with one main subject. It was recognized that the traditional cultures of South-East Asia were now feeling the impact of a set of new forces. The question was as to the result of this impact. The volume contains papers on the effect of industrialization, technology and community planning. There is one section on the patterns of social change, one on the mutual influence of Hinduism and Buddhism, and a number of sections on the effect of modern movements upon art, the dance and folk music.

The introductory essay, written by Professor Nilakanta Sastri, the editor of the volume, who is the Director of the Institute of Traditional Culture in Madras, provides a well worked-out statement of the possible reactions of culture to the impact of new forces. There are three such reactions: the clinging to the well-known ways, the complete and immediate overturn of those ways, and that of what the director calls, guided development. This third way involves a careful evaluation of the old to decide what in it carries basic value for living, and a gradual integration of the new forces into the values retained. Using this analysis as his standpoint, the writer discusses various phenomena which are now apparent in the nations of South-East Asia. This survey touches many aspects of culture, social organizations, religion, art, and folk practices; it ranges widely across the whole area from India and Pakistan on the east to Indonesia and the Philippines on the west. And, at the end, the author attempts to judge the present position of the cultures of the area as they face and deal with the new age.

There are fourteen different essays in the volume. As is to be expected, they are of differing value; one or two are superficial, while others contain fresh and suggestive insights. The essay on "Urban Culture in India" gives an historical survey over the past millenium. In this a clear distinction is made between the way the Muslims related themselves to India and the kind of relationship established by the British. The reader may not agree with all the writer says, but he will be stimulated to rethink his own understanding.

The volume is certain to be helpful to all who have an interest in the ongoing life of the nations of South-East Asia.

J. L. Dunstan.

Indian Village: The International Library of Sociology and Social Reconstruction. S. C. Dube. (Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., London), 1955. Pp. xiv + 248.

This study is the result of the Social Service Extension Project sponsored by the Osmania University and organized by the Department of Sociology and Anthropology in 1951–52. It is a descriptive survey of *Shamirpet*, a village about 25 miles from Hyderabad. The fact that the study is limited to one village is at the same time the strength and the weakness of the book—strength because the author and his team have succeeded in producing a solid piece of research by concentrating upon one village, and weakness because we cannot be sure that Shamirpet is typical of Indian villages.

The fact that Shamirpet is situated so close to Hyderabad and touched daily by 12 buses from that city must have considerable influence upon the life of the village. However, it is probably true that there is no such thing as *the* Indian Village, and that villages in this country differ greatly due to diversity in religion, caste, language, and climatic peculiarities. The author suggests therefore that " a series of studies of village communities from different parts of the country covering the many divergent patterns of organization and ethos " should be undertaken in order to get a right picture of rural India.

It may be asked also whether a study conducted in 1951–52 is not already outdated. Government schemes for community development, the entrusting of considerable power to the village *panchayat*, and the progress of elementary education should have had some effect upon the villages within the last ten years. Those who are interested in studying this problem would do well in reading Dube's later book: *India's Changing Villages, Human Factors in Community Development*, Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1958. This and similar studies have shown that no radical changes have taken place yet. The inner structure of the village remains the same in spite of all exterior influences. Dube's study of the village of Shamirpet is therefore valuable still.

The first half of the book is a description of the social, economic and religious structures of the village. The author deals with the castes in the village community, the role of the *panchayat*, the agricultural year, the religious festivals, etc. In the second half we are introduced to the family and community life, and we get a vivid picture of the tensions between the different groups and castes, and of the relations between husband and wife, a man and his family, children and parents, etc.

In this Bulletin it might be appropriate to draw attention to the section about village religion. Our knowledge about village religion today is very limited, since little serious study of it has been undertaken for many years. The bulk of Hindus at Shamirpet celebrate relatively few of the all-India Hindu festivals, the author tells us, but the whole population participates in the worship of the local goddesses and " saints ". Shamirpet has three goddesses, *Pochamma* (prevents smallpox), *Batkamma* (secures fertility) and *Maisamma* (protects the boundaries). Besides these deities there is also a local Muslim saint, *Jalal Miyan*. *Pochamma* is worshipped once a year, on a Thursday

or a Saturday in the month of *Shravana* (July-August), and both Hindus and Muslims take part in the festival. Each family brings offerings of rice, and some sacrifice goats, sheep and fowls. The Brahmin priest will offer the cereals for himself and other high caste families, but after that the *kummari* (the potter) takes over the functions of the priest. The *Batkamma* festival is in the month of *Ashvina* (September–October), and it is observed by the women as days of festivity with singing and dancing. The high caste women, however, do not participate in the dancing. The *Maisamma* ceremony is celebrated only every three or five years, especially when the crops are good. Here also the *Kummari* officiates as the priest and offers the sacrifices made by the farmers.

The fourth local religious festival is the *Jalal Miyan* fair, which is really a Muslim celebration in which the Hindus also participate, however. At all these four festivals a few people become possessed by the power of the goddess and they claim to be able to answer questions regarding the future: how the crops will be, whether there will be rain, etc. This information reveals that, although the Hindus and the Muslims have different beliefs and different ritual systems, they all participate in the common village ritual. The Muslims share with the Hindus the general beliefs associated with the cult of *Pochamma*, and the Hindus on their side participate in the *Jalal Miyan* festival. Similarly the Muslims join the Hindus in the *Dasara* procession, and the Hindus the Muslims in the *Moharram* procession. Both groups hold the same views about ghosts and evil spirits and deal with them in the same way.

Apparently there are no Christians at Shamirpet, therefore the book does not give us any information about the extent to which rural Christians participate in these festivals and share similar common beliefs, but one does suspect that what is said about village Muslims might be true also of rural Christians.

A serious defect in Dube's book seems to be that he has not been able to gather much information about the "untouchables", the Malas and the Madigas, who constitute a considerable percentage of the total population at Shamirpet. The little that is told about them sounds very stereotyped, and the reader is left with several questions in his mind: How do these people look upon themselves and their rôle in India today? Are there any signs of rebellion against the caste system? Do they worship the village goddesses only or do they have any belief in the gods of classical Hinduism? Do they worship any special deity? How do their homes look like? What is the nature of their family life, their customs, etc. One has a strong suspicion that Dube's team of interviewers mostly consisted of caste Hindus who did not want to come in touch with the "untouchables".

In spite of this, however, Dube's book gives us valuable information about Indian village life today. It may well be claimed that there are few other books which give a better introduction to rural India, and this volume ought to be required reading for pastors and missionaries who are assigned to work among village people in India. The author is to be commended also for having used non-technical language in his presentation of the material. The book is remarkably

free from that sociological jargon which characterizes so many books of this kind.

K. BAAGO.

Traditional India: Structure and Change. Edited by Milton Singer. (Philadelphia, American Folklore Society), 1959. Pp. 332.

A revival and restatement of traditional culture is an integral part of modern nationalism in India. This process is at the same time selective and creative. For only some cultural traditions are chosen, and they are being restated in order to discover " what they have been and what it is they are to become ". Thus the traditional structure of the cultural heritage of a people is constantly being creatively reconstructed. It is this phenomenon in contemporary Indian life which is the subject-matter of this symposium.

The volume consists of nineteen essays by distinguished American and Indian students of Sociology, Anthropology and Religion. These studies range over a variety of topics. But largely due to the editorial skill of the compiler, Milton Singer, the symposium is characterised by a remarkable unity in approach and presentation. This is furnished by two fundamental assumptions on which all the writers seem agreed. One is that there is an underlying unity and continuity in Indian civilization. The other is that a civilization is a structure of traditions formed by the relationship between two components—" a great tradition " of the reflective few and " a little tradition " of the largely unreflective many, the elite and the masses. Consequently, the endeavour to show how that in the variance created by caste, religion, language, regional areas, there is an over-arching unity. To the anthropologist, however, this poses a part-whole dilemma. For the question is not whether such a unity exists, but how to demonstrate it in the variants, if it exists. Also, it may be asked whether the assumption does not overlook the composite nature of Indian culture. Non-Aryan tradition may not be so easily dismissed as a "little tradition".

The first section in this symposium deals with the social organization of tradition. It attempts to describe the original pattern of the Hindu caste fabric and also to indicate the remarkable changes which have overtaken both the theoretical basis and the institutional form of what still is called *varṇāshrama dharma.* The papers in this section indicate that the traditional order of caste organization of society has not disappeared, however much it has changed. " Just as in the past it has always been changing, showing dynamic qualities, proving its adaptability, so today it may still be letting down new air roots from old branches."

The second section deals with the cultural media which serve as carriers of culture content, transmitting it from age to age. In India the oral tradition has played a unique role. Therefore the case studies in this section deal with such themes as *The Rām Līlā*, The Oral Poetry of the Todas, and the Forms of Communication in Viraśaiva Religion. Dr. Norvin Hein of Yale Divinity School has described in detail how *Rām Līlā* is performed in North India, in particular in Banaras, showing

how actors, audience and literary Pandits co-operate to link folk and classic traditions into a living dramatic performance. The essay on Virasaiva Religion by Dr. William McCormack points out how one South Indian sect freely combines both modern and traditional media to propagate its faith. And this mixture is quite typical not only for religious propaganda, but secular as well.

The third section deals with the problems and processes of cultural change. One outstanding consequence of cultural change, it is indicated, is the accompanying changes in the social organization. This is particularly noticeable in the effects of urbanization on traditional culture. Milton Singer in his case study of Madras in transition shows that for orthodox Brahmins in a metropolitan centre like Madras, for instance, the demands of modern secular occupations and education make it difficult to observe their traditional ritual obligations and to cultivate sacred Sanskrit learning. These Brahmins have not turned their backs on the traditional culture, little or great, but have participated actively along with others in adapting popular devotional culture to urban media, and in reviving and reshaping classical dance, music, etc. At the same time, in another essay, it is pointed out that urban influences may result in a "traditionalisation" as well as in "modernization" of culture. Especially in the case of outcaste and low caste immigrants into city areas, there is a noticeable tendency towards "Sanskritization" of their former customs and beliefs.

It would be difficult in a brief review such as this to sum up the fund of information that has been painstakingly gathered and skilfully put together in the papers found in this sizeable volume of sociological case studies. Much of this material would be valuable undoubtedly to professional students, but Christian evangelists who are seriously interested in the revolutionary change that is taking place in India today will profit by a careful study of this book.

In presenting the Second Five-Year Plan before the Indian Parliament in 1956 Pandit Nehru is reported to have said "We are concerned with the shaping of the future of India. It is therefore with a sense of the burden of history upon me, upon us, upon this House, that I face this problem". As Milton Singer comments in this passage in his introduction, "The sense of the burden of history, in short, is the sense of cultural and group identity, which having become blurred and problematic under long periods of foreign rule and influence, now strives for self-clarification and direction. This is the main justification, apart from the intrinsic or antiquarian interests of the subject, for undertaking a study of India's traditional culture. As a living heritage from the past, being transformed in the present, and projectively created into the future, it is both the subject and object of the changes now going on."

P. D. DEVANANDAN.

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